15¢

NOW TWICE A MONTH

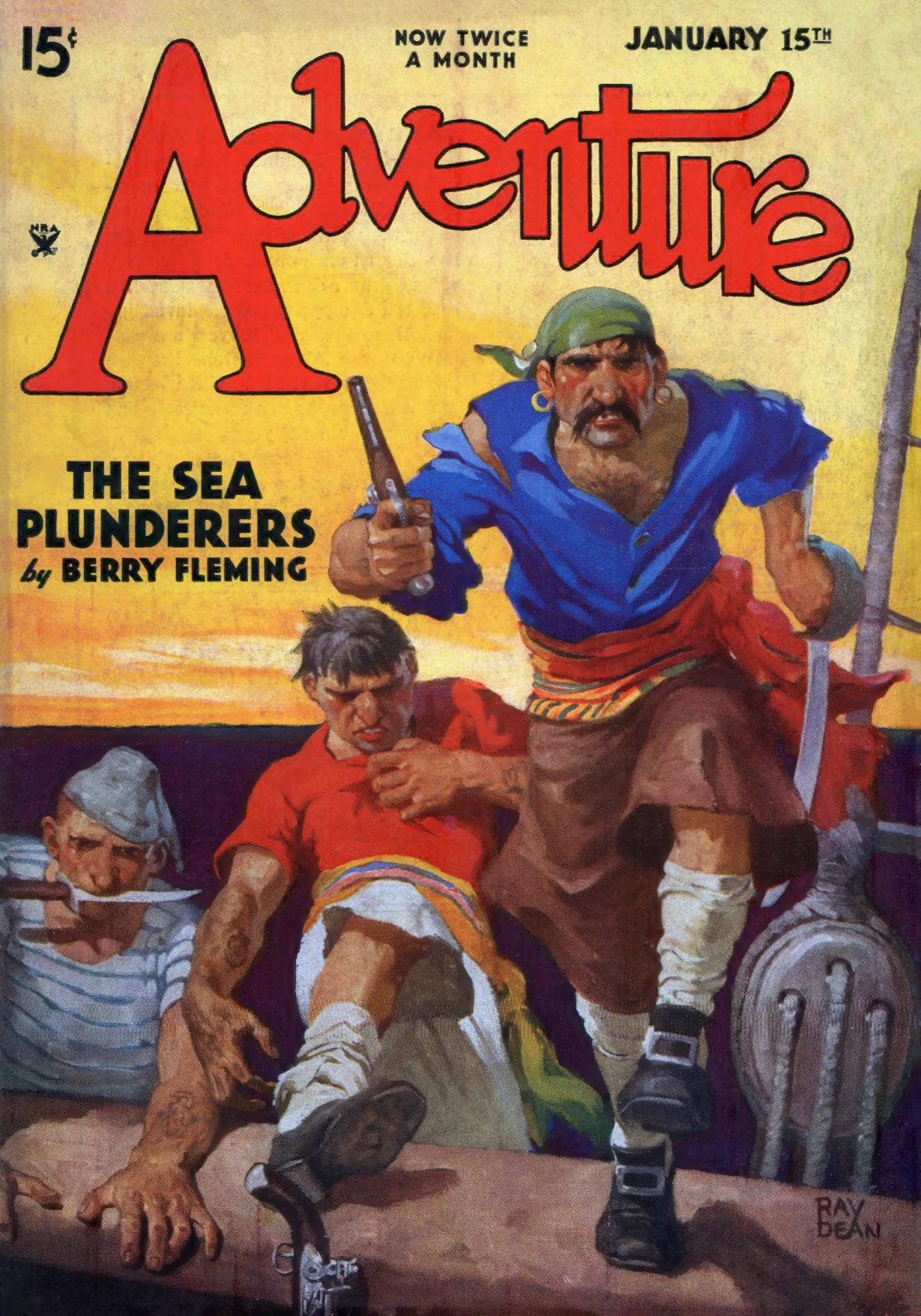
JANUARY 15TH

Adventure

NRA

THE SEA PLUNDERERS

by BERRY FLEMING



—for thrilling, action-packed detective fiction—for well plotted murder mysteries—for gripping tales, both novelette-length and short, of conflict between the wolves of crimeland and the law—for an endless parade of colorful, vividly drawn characters that includes hard-boiled coppers, private investigators, shrewd criminal lawyers and professional reward-hunters on the one hand; and cold-blooded killers, clever confidence men, snatch racketeers, dips and hold-up artists, yeggs and second-story men, petermen, fences, thieves and stir-birds on the other—turn twice every month to—

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

10¢ DIME DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

ON THE FIRST AND THE FIFTEENTH

—where the cream of the crop of detective and mystery-fiction writers foregathers issue after thrill-crammed issue. . . . For instance—in the current one, dated January 15th and on the newsstands now—there's a reproduction of the cover in the upper left-hand corner of this page—you'll find ERLE STANLEY GARDNER'S newest novelette, *Hard As Nails*, introducing Gil Best, a new type of criminal investigator with brains as well as brawn. And *Tracks of the Turtle*, a long mystery-horror feature by FREDERICK C. DAVIS, that carries you to Hollywood's movie colony and against that glamorous background brings Oke Oakley, the film capital's ace private detective to grips with the weirdest series of murders you'll encounter in a year's reading. As well as smashing stories by such top-notch writers as DONALD BARR CHIDSEY, OSCAR SCHISGALL and others. It's a double dose of danger and action—and all for a dime!

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Volume 90, No. 6 January 15th, 1935 Twice A Month

The Sea Plunderers(a two-part story—Part One) . BERRY FLEMING 2

The *Esperanza* sailed for the Carolina coast with gold and gems beneath her cabin floor. Captain Quinn, who distrusted his mate, and Mate Nicholas, who mocked his captain, agreed that the crew had lived long enough.

Pecos Bill's Wedding . . . . . TEX O'REILLY 35

"He was the most marryin' man you ever saw. That was his strongest weakness."

Murder Mill (a novelette) . . . . ROBERT E. PINKERTON 40

Just Another Jones had seen and liked that young cowboy somewhere before, and now the lad had a bullet through his heart. Just Jones trailed the sheriff's men riding away.

World Horses . . . . . PALMER HOYT 60

The story of Big Boy, a horse with ambition—the ambition to get into a rodeo and pitch riders around.

Death Along The Border . . . . JOHN MURRAY REYNOLDS 69

Long John Randall and his prisoner raced through the forest with their powder horns and bullet pouches thumping against their ribs—"It's bullet and scalping knife again at Hogan's Bush."

Boarders Away! . . . . . WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN 78

Clabber Jawn, a thick stubby man, imperturbably smoked his stubby pipe even when torpedoes came his schooner's way—and Bennett, Navy man to the core, faced and hated him.

Stunt Man . . . . . ALFRED BATSON 88

He needed a meal, did Palmer the Great, and his only trade was walking a wire a hundred feet high. And this time he had enemies in the crowd.

It's How It Feels . . . . . EDDY ORCUTT 99

Dusty Logan *had* to beat Bob Flynn in the ring—and not for money nor for fame. He had to beat Flynn or never feel a man.

Man Can Do . . . . . ANDREW A. CAFFREY 109

Private Witt joined the Army to become an aviator, and they gave him a one-cylinder pail and broom to fly—a hangar floor for landing field.

Just a Bush Leaguer (A Poem) . . BERTON BRALEY 117

The Camp-Fire . . . . *Where readers, writers and adventurers meet* 118

Ask Adventure . . . . *Information you can't get elsewhere* 121

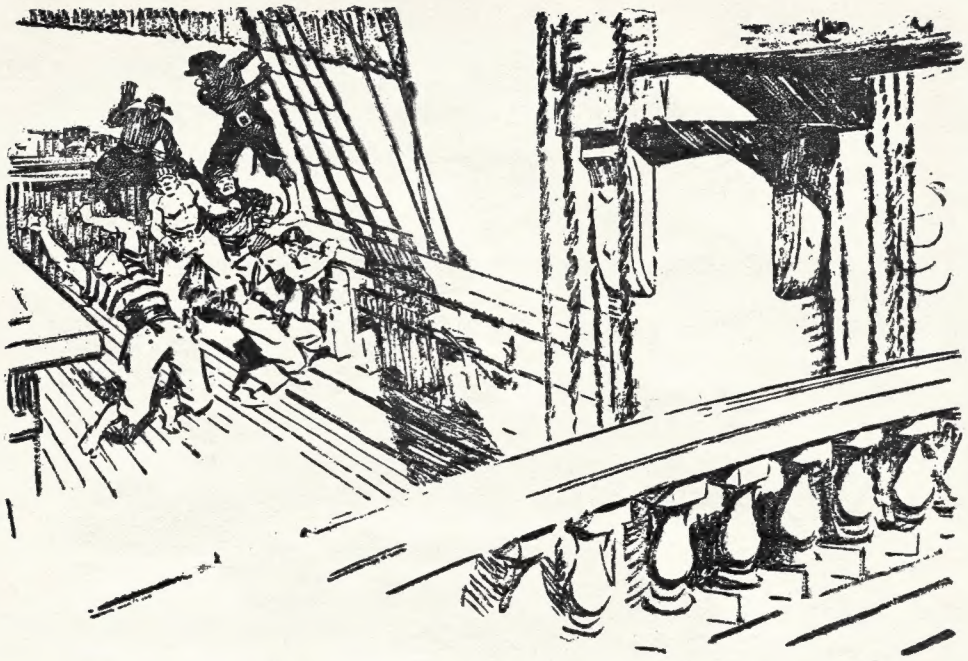
The Trail Ahead . . . . *News of the next issue* 128

Cover—Ray Dean *Illustrations—N. O'Keeffe, I. B. Hazelton*

Editor—Howard V. L. Bloomfield

Published twice a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, August 21, 1934, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Trade Mark Registered;

Copyright, 1935, by Popular Publications, Inc.



THE SEA PLUNDERERS

PART I

TOWARDS sunset, nine days out from Ras Angela, a cape on the northwest coast of Africa, the lookout spied a merchantman. At the cry Captain Quinn rolled up the companionway out of the cabin, a brass telescope under his arm.

"Where away?' he muttered at Nicholas, his black hair a riot in the wind.

Nicholas showed him the sail, a point on the far edge of the ocean. The captain adjusted his glass and squinted through it for several minutes; then he lifted his head and glanced at the sky to windward.

"There'll be a moon tonight, Waine."

"Full moon," replied Nicholas, reading his thoughts.

The captain's eyes became alive.

"One more, eh? For dessert, eh?" He put the glass up again and spoke more softly and without turning his head: "How many can we spare?"

"About half a dozen have begun to think they are captains of their destinies instead of second mates," said Nicholas. "We can easily spare those six."

The captain snapped the telescope away from his eyes: "Call all hands and set the royals!"

Nicholas threw back his head and laughed without a sound.

"Bravo, my captain!" said he, as though to himself, but loudly enough for the captain to hear.

The command to lay aloft and set the royals was answered with a shout; they took to the shrouds like cats. They knew what setting the royals meant with a merchantman on the horizon.

They were a horrid-looking enough lot to meet at high noon; to see them now with the sun sharp and red in the west throwing its amber light over them and

A Two-Part Story

By BERRY FLEMING

intensifying the scarlet and yellow and orange of their shirts and silken sashes, taken in a manner the devil would pale to remember, and glinting wild on their pewter mugs as they raised them brimming to the health of their gallant Captain Quinn—to see them now, roaring like a storm, an adversary might have been a brave man and yet felt a shudder in his spine.

They had been gathered here and there indiscriminately, from captive ships, from drifting rafts, from the gutters of dirty little watering-places in the southern oceans. There were scarcely two from a single country; from Spain, Greece, Mexico, Brazil, they came from all over the world, scarred, slashed, disfigured both in body and in soul. But they never hesitated when the boarding-hooks were thrown, and Captain Quinn, he loved them.

There were a few, however, he did not love—a sullen few who, even now, in the sudden burst of activity and ravenous enthusiasm, cast about them looks that worried the captain. Nicholas knew who they were; indeed, it was Nicholas who had pointed out to the captain the fact of their existence. When the captain had asked how many could be spared, Nicholas understood him perfectly.

When they were cruising the captain taught them discipline; they scrubbed the decks at dawn every morning, they mended the sheets, they tarred down the rigging, they laid out of the forecastle hatch like jacks-in-the-box, they took to the yards as though pursued by nine serpents, they answered "Sir" when they were spoken to—they were taught that there was one God and his name was Captain Quinn and his prophet was Mr. Waine.

One of them, a short-necked man from Portugal with hairy hands, Henri Dirque by name, had been slow in learning. He

hesitated with his "Sir." Captain Quinn after some deliberation had thought he would be of more service to them dead; Nicholas had thought he would be of more service to them as second mate. But they had delayed changing his status one way or the other, and now there were half a dozen reluctant with their "Sirs."

The merchantman, taking courage from the coming darkness, tried to flee. Just as the moon came out of the water, white and shining like the inside of a China cup, Captain Quinn flung up his thumb and a cannonball went thundering across the wind.

The merchantman replied with a smaller gun.

"The prize resists," said Nicholas. "It *would* have been a shame for those six not to die in action."

IN THE misty calm of dawn Captain Quinn watched four of his men hauling up the chest containing the most valuable part of the merchantman's portable cargo. When they had got it over the bulwarks they brought it aft to the cabin and left it with the negro, Daniel, to store away with the already astounding wealth that lay in the locker under the floor.

And when the captain drew up his crew for an inspection he found that their depletion had been enormous; seven men were dead and two more were seriously wounded. Dirque remained without a scratch, though a bullet had torn a gash in his shirt at the waist.

Had the crew been of a more observant eye, or had they been given more opportunity of observing, the character of the wounds by which their brothers had been killed might have caused them second thought, and they might also have drawn some general inference from the character of their brothers who had been thus killed.

They might have recalled that five out of the number *hors de combat* had been men of a, so to speak, radical turn of politics; they had looked Captain Quinn and Mr. Waine straight in the eyeballs; they had been almost invariably the last into the rigging.

These five had been notoriously fearless men; they would have turned their backs in fight on nothing that breathed under God's heaven. Yet there they lay, most opportunely dead, with bullet-holes in their backs.

But Nicholas gave them no chance to observe anything. While his crew was engaged in removing the chest he unfastened the cords that bound the wrists and ankles of four of the merchantman's seamen and, ordering them to collect these five brave men beside the bulwarks, read over them, with an exceedingly grave and respectful mien, the burial service used in the Church of England, and had them deposited feet first over the side. This done, Nicholas bound the four pallbearers hand and foot again and left them.

There was a young woman leaning over the rail of the merchantman with her back to the field of battle, weeping frantically. Her dress, he noted, was of blue—an incongruously peaceful blue.

"Madam," said Nicholas, approaching her and speaking in his softest, most melodious voice, "you wring my heart. You would do me a favor by telling me how I can help you."

At the first word the girl spun round facing him, her fists clenched.

"You thief, you murderer, you scum, you coward!"

Nicholas bowed very low. "*And*," said he, "your very humble servant."

"You sneak, thief, coward! I dare you to kill me!"

"I could not be so cruel, madam, to the rest of the world," said Nicholas.

The girl looked at him a moment, surprised at his conduct, then said in a less petulant voice:

"Haven't you enough without stealing a woman's necklace?"

"A necklace?"

"Keep everything else, but give me that again." She shut her eyes. "It won't be valuable to you. A simple gold necklace, with a locket and a diamond."

She suddenly raised her arm and pointed beyond him.

"There is the man."

It was Dirque.

"Observe, my lady," said Nicholas in his finest, and drew his slim rapier in a swish from its scabbard.

Nicholas called Dirque across the deck; as he came, bending the nimble blade back and forth with his fingers. The girl drew back closer to the rail. The manacled crew and passengers held the meeting in their eyes—one slender, fine, graceful; the other hard-featured, uncouth, sullen, strong as iron.

The seaman halted six feet away.

"This lady's necklace, Dirque," said Nicholas in his bland style, still bending the narrow blade of the rapier, "in the confusion of welcoming us, was mislaid. A simple gold necklace, with a locket and a diamond. Go to the fo'c's'le and fetch it. It was taken, I am sure, through some mistake. I don't care to know who took it. Bring it back."

Dirque paused for the fraction of a second; then he turned away and went over the side of the merchantman to the deck of the *Esperanza,* still lashed alongside.

He returned with the necklace, and Nicholas presented it to the owner with another bow. She took it quickly to her breast and looked at him steadily, puzzled at what he had done.

Nicholas dropped the rapier back into its sheath, put his heels together, and, giving her a flash of his impenetrable smile, made her his lowest bow.

"*Au 'voir,*" said he; "I am superstitious about saying 'Good-by.' "

Yet he never saw her again.

He then turned to the crew and passengers gathered distrustfully by and repeated the gesture.

"*Au 'voir, mes amis.*"

As he returned to the *Esperanza* he wondered if this pleasant scene had not been somewhat too expensive. He would have found it hard to withstand the lure of such an audience, but he now had a sworn personal enemy for a shipmate, which was an awkward piece of baggage.

THE mist, which up to this time had been hanging thinly over the water, suddenly lifted, and the lookout on the *Esperanza* cried, "Sail, ho!"

Off to the east, quite close in, appeared the heavy white wings of an English frigate, doubtless having been alarmed by the firing and now marching slowly through the morning, looking for the cause of the disturbance. Simultaneously the two vessels were spotted by the man-o'-war. Out burst her upper sails like puffs of smoke from cannon.

Nichol sprang over the bulwarks. There was a hesitant shout of hope from the crew and passengers of the merchantman, in which he thought he heard the cry of the young woman. He thought she screamed, "Hurry!" A modest man, under the circumstances would probably have granted this as being addressed to the captain of the frigate, but Nicholas, being Nicholas, took it to himself and from the poop of the *Esperanza* waved her his thanks and farewell.

With marvelous speed they cast off from the merchantman and set their sails. The frigate had scarcely swung round, before the new wind billowed the *Esperanza's* canvas and started the water muttering along her hull.

The appearance of the frigate was really for Nicholas and the captain a most fortunate accident: it lay to the east, which made it inevitable that the *Esperanza* be set for the broad desert of the Atlantic. This was so precisely what they wanted that it seemed as if the

devil, to whom they were both fond of defiantly praying, had answered their petitions and blessed them; without this unquestioned necessity for putting to sea, the crew would most likely have grumbled at leaving these hunting grounds.

The captain knew the resources of his vessel. The possibility of being overhauled by the frigate did not concern him; he had never yet encountered a ship that the *Esperanza* could not leave on the horizon behind her stern with eight hours of a fair wind. But the captain felt that his crew were averse to sailing too many days westward, and, having no place short of the southern coasts of the American colonies as his goal, he did not wish to distance his pursuer so far as to make the frigate give up the chase. The ideal course of events would have been for the frigate to drive him all the way across the Atlantic; everything would have been well with the crew then.

But he thought this was hoping for too much. The frigate was probably a sentry whose post was on the road to India, and he did not think she would come very far away from it. There was a chance, however, that she might; he had heard, a year before, that the English king had issued a proclamation against him and Waine, offering the flattering reward of two thousand pieces-of-eight for either of them, dead or alive—the reason, he supposed, being that they had failed to take the Peace of Paris and the close of the Seven Years' War as anything but a joke on England, allowing him and Waine now to shoot at English ships as well as at French, commission or no commission.

And there was a chance that the frigate would learn who he was from the merchantman and track him round the world on the possibility of being able to win the reward and to sail home with his and Waine's heads hanging from her hypocritical bowsprit. Ugly thought! He cast his eye over his canvas and left the quarter-deck to Waine.

For eleven days the wind flowed as steadily as a river, and for eleven days the sun rose between two and three points to starboard of the frigate. That night, for the eleventh time, Captain Quinn and Waine raised their glasses and drank "to the persistency of the British navy." But on the twelfth morning there was a mist, and when it thinned out the frigate had disappeared.

In the evening Quinn called his crew aft and addressed them from the break of the poop. They had been driven, he said, through ill luck, practically across the ocean. He had consulted Mr. Waine and they had decided that their wisest course would be simply to take advantage of this bad fortune and hurry on through the few more days that separated them from colonial waters. Their ship was badly in need of cleaning; the water supply was getting low. They would go up one of the southern rivers and refit. They would then be in a position to prey upon the rich trade that ran between the colonies and England. This trade, he said, was almost wholly unprotected; they would be able to conduct their profession with safety and profit.

This specious argument had been put into the captain's head by Nicholas; the real plan was somewhat different. Their treasure, Nicholas pointed out to him, had so accumulated as to make it urgent that something be done with it.

"We can divide it among all souls," said Nicholas.

At this Quinn was forced to expectorate.

"Precisely," said Nicholas.

It was Nicholas's suggestion that they sail to the coast of South Carolina, which he claimed to know something about, having called there, he said, on previous cruises, and, once there, carry out an idea of his that would bring about a more agreeable distribution of the treasure. Being mostly in plate, it would be

advisable to put it away for a number of years, and, in order to be assured that it would remain put away, they would probably have to be some shooting. And, for shooting, there was no place like a quiet creek in the midst of deserted islands; an interruption would spoil everything. Nicholas knew the ideal spot.

Thus it was that the arrival of the British ship and its chase played perfectly into the hands of the officers of the *Esperanza,* and thus that on the afternoon of the sixth of November the lookout had the pleasure of sighting the flat coast of Carolina, lying on the rim of the ocean like a white string.

WHEN Nicholas suggested to the captain the desolate, sandy islands that made up the shores of Carolina as a place where their treasure would be safe until they should call for it again, Quinn applauded; one of the chief reasons Quinn had made Nicholas his right-hand man was the possibility of getting from him just such information.

There were other reasons too. This alone would have made Nicholas an expensive luxury had he not been possessed of those other invaluable attributes, a calm brain, a steady hand, and a cold black eye that could hold a man like the open end of a pistol. All of these qualities the captain himself had in some degree; what Quinn wanted and what Nicholas had was a mind, a reasoning intelligence, a brain with the habit of summing up the past and projecting itself into the future. He could not have stated his needs so specifically, but Nicholas pleased him and Nicholas had such a mind.

Down in the bottom of the captain's soul Nicholas occasionally gave him a tremble. It was less than fear, though it was surely akin to it. He did not tremble at Nicholas's physical strength, which was not so great as his own, and he did not tremble at Nicholas's skill; but there was something cunning about Nicholas's mind that he could not understand—something quick, like the dart of the point of Nicholas's rapier.

With any of his crew the captain knew how to deal; when they got out of control, as they once did on a memorable July night in the Indian Ocean, he knew their feelings, and though he could not move them, he was not afraid. They never made him tremble; he knew them too well.

But Nicholas was beyond his comprehension. There was at times a cold-bloodedness about this slender youth which, though the captain applauded it with evident pleasure, turned some little nerve inside of him into a quaver.

But Quinn had an eye and a will of his own, and he covered his vague uneasiness; Nicholas never thought that Quinn feared him. But he never thought of fearing Quinn.

When they started across, the details of the plan were not clear to him. He did not think of the details; he had got into the habit of leaving details to chance or fate—or Nicholas. When, therefore, Nicholas came to him one night during the second mate's watch with the particulars and he heard them put forward for the first time, coldly and practically, though he had followed his profession for thirty years his mind rebelled at the thought of the iron courage it would require to carrying the idea through.

He took a long drink from one of the mugs on the table between them and stared for several minutes at the swinging cabin lantern over their heads.

Nicholas had worked the plan out on this reasoning: mutinies are never successful if the masters are prepared and are made of steel.

"I am steel," said Nicholas, looking at him frigidly. "You, my captain, are—steel too. Daniel belongs to me, heart and soul. We are therefore three."

The scheme was simply to sail the brig into one of the thousand little inlets and

creeks that slashed the sandy coast, and there to shatter the thick, white silence, which Nicholas assured him would be pressing over the islands, with the pistol shots necessary to eliminate the crew.

"Provoke a mutiny," murmured the captain.

"Nay," said Nicholas. "Mutiny, ourselves."

Quinn took a deep, slow breath.

Nicholas continued.

With the aid of the powerful Daniel, they would then remove the treasure, bury it on one of the islands, sink the ship, and have Daniel row them to the nearest port, or even out to sea, playing the rôle of shipwrecked seamen. The brig was becoming too well known among the British fleet and among all trading vessels, and it was thus coming to be needlessly dangerous to occupy her; they could live for a while as landsmen, and when that existence irked them, could fit out a new ship with a small fraction of the treasure and once more take up their profession.

Plainly the plan staggered the captain.

But there was something about Nicholas that made anything he proposed to do seem as good as accomplished; he was the kind of man who grappled others to his side, not so much because they loved him or admired him or were enthusiastic about his project, but merely because they dreaded having such a man opposed to them. Something of this dread played in the captain's mind; there was in the way Nicholas proposed the matter a quality which seemed to declare that he intended to put it through anyway and was only giving the captain a chance to choose his side.

They lay sprawled over the cabin table off and on for more than a week, examining a map of the Carolina coast, the captain asking questions, Nicholas answering them readily and convincingly.

He ran his slim finger over the map. There on the northern bank of a salt river was Port Royal; there, Port Royal Sound, leading straight up inland, broad and deep. On the southern side of the Sound, fronting the ocean, was the large island of Hilton Head, shaped like an isosceles triangle, with the short base bordering the Sound.

At the apex of the figure, twenty miles farther along the coast, was Ballast Point and the opening of Old Topsail Inlet; here, he said, the water was deep enough at the flood tide for a ship of the *Esperanza's* tonnage to sail easily over the sand-bars that guarded the mouth. Two or three miles up the Inlet, out of view from the ocean, there opened out a smaller body of water, winding tortuously into the center of Hilton Head Island like a thread that has been too much twisted; this was Skull Creek.

At the joining of the Creek with the Inlet and for dozens of miles in every direction, the country was without a single inhabitant. There were a few houses, Nicholas told him, on the side of the Island that faced the Sound, but these were fifteen miles away.

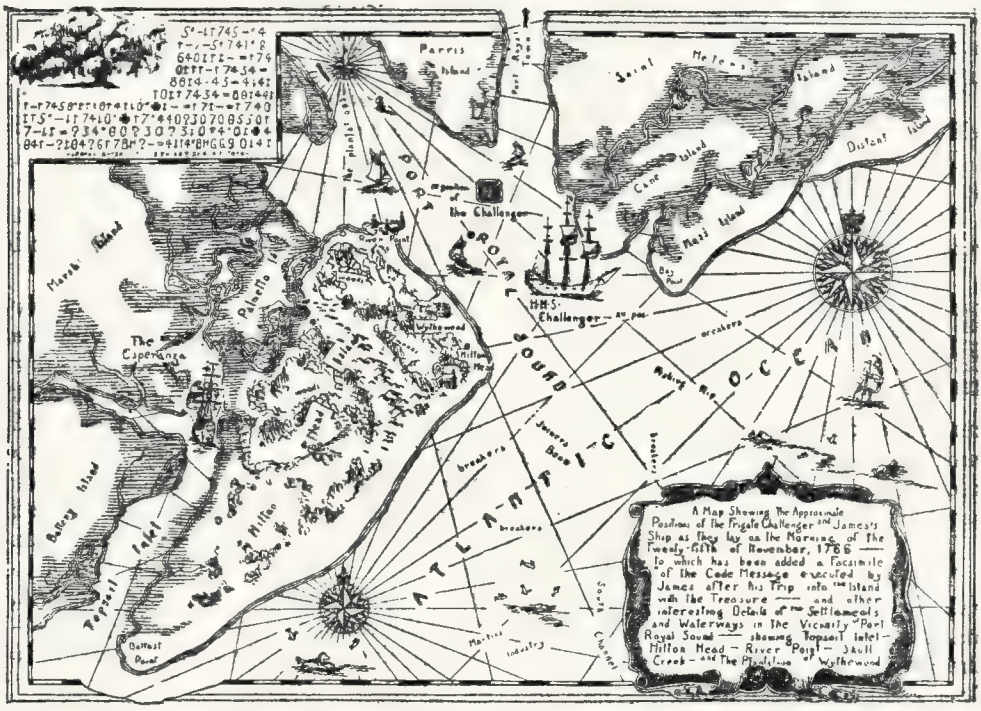
"Here," said Nicholas, making a cross on the map at the mouth of the Creek, "is where the curtain should rise."

The important question of ammunition had already been answered. Nicholas had answered it three years before, when he and the captain had altered the brig to suit their purposes. The powder and extra firearms were stored in the hold beneath the officers' cabins; the compartment was closed off from the rest of the vessel by a bulkhead running across between decks, and could be entered only by means of a ladder descending from the rear of the cabin.

This meant that the crew would be able to fire very little. They would probably have a few shots left from the ammunition that Daniel had dealt out to them when they sighted the merchantman; once this was expended, their knives and cutlasses would be their only

weapons. As for the three in the cabin, there was no limit to their firing.

The success of the plan, Nicholas argued, was assured through the conformation of the brig. In the waist of the vessel was the galley; forward of the galley was the trunk of the foremast, and forward of this, the hatchway leading into the forecastle and opening aft. Aft of the galley was the mainmast and the forward wall of the officers' cabin, running entirely across the ship.


Parris Island
Point Royal
Port Royal Sound
HMS Challenger
Challenger
Marsh Island
Pinckney Island
The Capemanga
Hilton Head
Battery Island
Topsail Island
Dataset Point
Jenkins Bluff
Breakers
Breakers
Dangerous Shoals
Channel
Dangerous Rocks
Dangerous Rocks
Dangerous Rocks

only ripped his shirt."

"*I* won't rip his shirt," said Quinn—"unless he's got it over his head."

"Bravo!" said Nicholas, his eyes laughing.

Then he suddenly lowered his voice: "And Mr. Graves, your second mate?"

"Throw him overboard!" said Quinn.

"Exactly!"

It was the middle of the afternoon when land was sighted.

Nicholas bounded up the companionway and stood by the rail for some minutes in silence, contemplating the country where he was born.

"Did you ever hear of Carolina, Daniel?" he said to the negro.

The negro's mouth dropped open and he seemed about to exclaim.

"Pst!" said Nicholas sharply. "Of course you never heard of Carolina!"

THEY might have gone up the Inlet before dark, but Nicholas recommended wide daylight for the raising of the curtain and they sailed farther southward, past the opening in the islands, keeping the land just within view on the horizon.

The night came on and grew old.

When the second mate went below, half an hour before dawn, Daniel was standing in the shadow at the foot of the stairs. As he stepped to the cabin floor Daniel's tremendous black paw was slapped over his mouth and his arms were pinned to his sides in an embrace that almost crushed him. In an instant he was gagged and his hands bound behind him; before he had recovered from his astonishment his ankles were tied and Quinn was unlatching the port in the stern. Daniel picked him up like a baby and pushed his wriggling body head foremost through the window.

Quinn went back to his bunk and Daniel climbed the companionway to the poop.

"Mr. Graves is sick, sah," said he to Nicholas, for the benefit of the helmsman.

"Have you given him water?" said Nicholas.

"Yassah, maussah."

"All right. Go below."

The steersman had his eye on the luff of the mainsail, but his ear was roving, and when he was relieved he carried the information forward that explained the absence of the second mate.

At daylight, sail was shortened and they crossed over the bars at the mouth of Topsail Inlet.

In the cabin Daniel was seated in a corner, loading the entire arsenal. All about him on the floor were long-barreled pistols; as he loaded them he placed them in order on the table. He sat on one keg of powder, with another open beside him, and loaded calmly and silently.

Captain Quinn was somewhat shaky in his fingers. Fifteen years before he had listened to a member of a crew which had been thus mutinied against relate what had taken place; there had been ten men in that crew and two officers, and when the smoke had blown away the eight remaining men elected their own officers to replace the ones then hanging by their heels from the topgallant yard-arms—thus Quinn noticed, when he raised the brass telescope to examine the shore, that his fingers were shaking.

If Nicholas shook at all it was inside, where no one could see; outwardly he was as calm as an old actor playing a familiar rôle. When he was awakened by Daniel before the night had ended, he dressed quietly, shaved himself as he invariably did, and relieved the second mate on deck. He stood beside the helmsman when they headed into the Inlet to keep him off the bars, and now and then walked about with loud treads to keep the helmsman's mind from comprehending the noises in the cabin, as Daniel, under the captain's directions, barricaded

the door and windows in the forward wall with the mattresses from the bunks.

The sun had appeared by the time they came into the middle of the Inlet. A hundred yards on each side of the brig, creeping slowly up the level water, was the marsh, stretching away to the islands behind, cool, damp, a reddish yellow in the new sunlight. It ran between the Inlet and the islands like a sort of twilight, neither night nor day, neither land nor water.

Tall sprouts of grass grew out of the dark gray slime in shafts as large as a man's finger, stained for two or three feet by the salty water which slipped stealthily, silent as a shadow, over their roots twice a day. Above the stain, the shaft divided and sent off long sprays curling outward like the cutting edge of a scimitar.

From a distance it looked like a broad field of wheat ready for the mowing, through which a man might push his way with ease. But Nicholas knew these marshes; he knew that the fine velvety mud would sink beneath a man like gruel, and he knew that the edge of each of those tapering blades of grass was as keen as a razor—he knew that if any of the crew jumped overboard when the moment arrived the marsh would torture them and suck their lives away. He knew that every rod the ship glided farther up the Inlet made them just so much more securely his prisoners.

On the firm ground, rising out of the marsh as the marsh rose out of the water, the land lay as level as the tops of the grass; here and there small clusters of pines huddled together like men whispering over some plot; the space between was a dull green waste of bushes and vines and briars. Far inland, on Hilton Head Island, the ground rose into a low ridge of hills covered with trees, round the base of which the sea must have beaten numberless ages before.

Five miles beyond this ridge, Nicholas knew, was the house of his father; he looked at the soft line of its crest and thought how many dangers still separated him from home. The distance was short, the time was short; if he were to go home at all he should be there by the night of the following day.

Why was he returning home, he asked himself. He could not answer the question. He had always intended to return, but why, he could not say.

To put his arms once more about his father?

No; not he.

To see how it fared with his sister, but a few steps behind him on the Broad Highway?

No.

To see what seventeen years had done to the beauty of his mother's eyes?

Hardly.

Why, then? To make them tremble with pride in their wandering son?

He laughed in negation.

To rest, perhaps. Yes, to rest; that was a good reason, though that was not the exact reason either. He did not know, and the question that was thrusting itself every minute farther into the front of his mind was not Why but Whether.

IN THE bow three men were gathered round Dirque, who leaned with his back against the rail and could look at Nicholas out of the corners of his eyes. They were talking in low tones and Nicholas saw one of them fling a quick glance over his shoulder at the stern.

He would not have allowed them to stand there idle under different circumstances; now he let them gather, and even when they began to talk more loudly did not disperse them.

He sauntered a step or two nearer the helmsman and the cabin ladder, and once more looked at the islands slowly unfolding as the brig crept up the Inlet closer and closer to the spot that he had marked on the map with a cross.

The Island pleased Nicholas. It was

still as deserted as when he was a child and his nurse had frightened him with threats of the bad men coming up out of the lagoon country to take him away with them if he persisted in departing from the paths of an exemplary young man. The "lagoon country" meant, vaguely, the lower end of the Island, a section which no one, probably, had ever had cause to penetrate; from the crest of the hill a lone pioneer had evidently seen the black mud-lake out of which Skull Creek flowed to the Inlet and named it the lagoon country. It was supposed to be infested with yellow moccasins and other poisonous water serpents, not only deadly themselves but poisoning all the springs. It was completely deserted; it had always been deserted and probably always would be. He watched it moving slowly by him now, but one step above the marsh that surrounded it, soundless, abandoned apparently even by the birds. There was no need to fear that his little melodrama would be interrupted.

According to count, there were fourteen long-barreled pistols lying loaded on the table in the cabin below him; there were four cutlasses and seven knives. Quinn could shoot, Nicholas relied on that, and he had seen him put a knife through a man's throat at twenty yards. And Nicholas, above all, relied on himself; he was quicker with a gun than his captain, and, he suspected, a shade more accurate. Quinn fired from the level of his eye; Nicholas fired from his waist, and saved that fraction of a second which might mean life.

There were twelve men in the crew. The number around Dirque had now increased to five; one man stood on the bulwarks leaning against the foremast shrouds; another had climbed half-way up the shrouds, from where he was looking at the new country swimming by. There was the lookout in the foretop, though Nicholas could not see him. The helmsman was beside him, which accounted for ten of them. The other two, he guessed, were in the forecastle.

The helmsman at his elbow was as good as dead; the charge in his pistol Nicholas would send into the midst of the group in the bow. Quinn should be able to place one shot before the group scattered. If everything went well, the number remaining after the first twenty seconds should be nine.

These nine might act in various ways; they would probably separate, some leaping into the water as soon as they realized what the shot meant, some seeking shelter on board. He and Quinn would take care of the ones on board; the marsh, he hoped, would take care of the ones in the water. Not a man must escape. When the time came for unloading the chests, there must be no chance of briar bushes having eyes.

But there was no more time for idle speculation; before him Nicholas now saw the forking of the silver inlet and the opening of Skull Creek.

He kicked with his heel against the floor to signal the captain. The captain coughed. Everything was ready.

IN A moment the helmsman lay quivering on the poop and Nicholas had pulled the wheel hard to starboard. Dirque's group spun round facing him and Nicholas fired his bullet calmly at the nearest man. He dropped down the companion-way into the cabin as the brig lurched and grounded.

There was a shout from Dirque and a scampering of feet. Quinn fired through the window as Nicholas was bolting down the hatch.

After the first terrified confusion there was not a sound. When Nicholas peeped through the corner of his window round the edge of the mattress two men were lying on the deck; not another soul was visible. The early sun lay mistily over the deck, stretching out the shadow of the eastward railing.

There was something artificial about the silence; it was the silence that denotes not an absence of life but of life restrained and listening.

Suddenly a man leaped up from behind the coiled rope of the anchor and made a dash for the ladder into the forecastle. He dived down the steps head foremost amid a great clatter, with one of Nicholas's bullets in his side.

"Four from twelve leaves eight," said Nicholas. "Daniel, a pistol for your master."

The crew had not fired a shot. They had probably been taken too much by surprise to fire, even if there had been any target. Not having fired, left them, Nicholas reasoned, eight bullets—nine, if they could use the pistol which the man had just brought them from the coiled rope of the anchor. There was a pistol in the belt of each of the men lying on the deck, but no one would be allowed to get his hands on those. Nicholas watched them through his window, his fresh pistol resting its nose in the corner of the sill.

Deep silence and immobility fell over the ship once more. For an hour, judging by the distance which the shadow of the railing had crept towards the scuppers, Nicholas and the captain peered at the opening of the forecastle stairs. There was not a move.

The sail under which they had come up the Inlet still hung on the yards and exerted a slight influence towards grounding the brig more securely. She lay on a mud bank almost in the middle of the water, had gone aground at approximately high tide; the marsh on either side was submerged except for a foot or two at the top of the long grass. It was ebbing now, which would fix the hull firmly in the bottom; the receding water would probably leave the brig with a list. They could hear the water hustling along the sides back to sea. This was the only sound.

Matters seemed to have come to a complete standstill. No motion, no noise; all their senses were idle, except for the faint, salty breath of the marshes.

This inaction worried Nicholas, because the forecastle seemed to have decided to wait for darkness. If this were the plan, it was obviously necessary to interrupt it; as soon as night came the cabin defenses would amount to almost nothing. The crew could come safely out of the forecastle and possibly crawl even to the windows before they in the cabin would be able to see clearly enough to fire.

The shadow of the railing had crept close in when Nicholas saw Dirque's head suddenly appear above the deck, fling a look up the foremast, and vanish. Both his and Quinn's bullets converged on the spot at the same instant; only one report sounded, and only one flurry of splinters was cast up from the deck where the eyes had appeared, but both barrels were smoking when they handed them back to Daniel. In a moment new pistols nestled in the corner of the windows, but the little black rectangle was empty.

"That may be an expensive hundredth of a second," said Nicholas. Then, half to himself: "But why did he do it?" Dirque knew they were in the cabin; he knew that their pistols covered the opening. Then Nicholas started and looked at Quinn. "We are prisoners!"

Quinn whirled on Nicholas with his pistol.

"The lookout!" said Nicholas, taking no notice of the captain's breach of confidence. "There's a man in the foremast."

Quinn dropped his pistol as though it had been pointed at Nicholas's breast by accident and stepped back to the window. But he could learn nothing there. It had been barricaded in such a way that neither the crosstrees nor the foretop was visible from it; the opening left was so small that he could see hardly above the foresail yard.

"The first thing to be done is to get

him out," said Nicholas. He was silent for a moment, then abruptly took two fresh pistols from the table and stuck one in each side of his belt. He cocked a third and carried it in his hand. "Keep your pistol on the fo'c's'le," said he; "I'm going a-hunting."

The hatchway through which Nicholas had dropped after putting the brig aground opened under the boom of the spanker, now large with the sail furled upon it and giving, Nicholas reasoned, some shelter to him if he went to the poop for a better examination of the mast. He climbed the ladder, softly unbolted the hatch, and put his head far enough out to get a glimpse of the little latticed platform at the base of the foretopmast. It was empty.

But he was not convinced. He felt certain that if he or the captain stepped through the door in the forward wall of the cabin a pistol ball would come out of the sky. The easiest way of proving this was to step through the door, but he preferred to go about proving it in another way.

There lay the helmsman not three feet away, in a most uncomfortable posture, face down and one arm pinned beneath his breast, just as he had fallen when Nicholas struck him the murderous blow on the back of his head. He had spun three times round and gone down as though trying to butt a hole in the deck. Nicholas crawled out beside him, keeping carefully under the boom.

He looked round him. The opening of the forecastle was empty; the deck below was empty, except for the two men, one of whom was lying on his back in the sun staring into the rigging. On each side lay the marshes, whispering to the creek as it curled by on its way to the ocean. Towards the nearer shore a white bird was flying; there would probably be more of them now, he thought, for the tide was dropping and leaving their food easier to obtain.

He lay motionless for a time, listening. On board everything was still; not a sound came from the forecastle, not a breath from aloft.

But unnecessary waiting was not in keeping with Nicholas's nature; he had seized the offensive, it was up to him to go on with it. He took the pistols out of his belt and crawled on his stomach, under the shelter of the boom, to the railing that ran across the edge of the poop deck.

Here he was somewhat protected; the posts of the railings were large and set close together for strength. The space between was wide enough to enable him to aim and fire easily, but it was narrow enough to protect him from a shot coming out of the forecastle, unless it was directed by an expert eye. Dirque's eye was expert—but he could not worry about that. He put his head slowly out from behind the boom and looked aloft.

THERE were six men in the forecastle; after the first storm of oaths and invectives at Quinn and Nicholas for their treachery, Dirque rose and tapped with his pistol butt on the side of a bunk. The taps were not loud but they brought an immedite end to the confusion.

"Who's in charge here?" said Dirque.

"You," said one of them.

"Right," said Dirque. "Everybody satisfied?"

A man by the name of Ball muttered something; Dirque gave no appearance of having heard him, and called for an inventory of their armament. Every man was to lay out on the floor all of his weapons; they would then be distributed by Dirque so that every one should be equally armed. He counted six pistols, four knives, two stilettos, and six ponderous cutlasses. Aside from the charge in the pistols they had no ammunition.

They had just laid down every weapon they had, Dirque had just finished counting then, when there was a clatter overhead, a pistol-shot, and the man with

Nicholas's bullet in his side pitched headlong down the ladder and scattered the weapons with the beating of his arms. The boatswain ordered him put in a bunk and his pistol and knife added to the armament.

Then Dirque went to the man and asked him if there were any others alive on deck.

The man looked at him for a minute, groaning, then whispered: "Foremast—two." He rolled his head over and never moved again.

Dirque slapped his thigh in pleasure. He gathered his five men in front of him and spoke to them in a low voice.

There were two men up the foremast, which increased their number to eight—eight brave men. And if eight brave men let themselves be robbed of the money they had fought and bled for—if, before that night his hungry eyes weren't feasted on the carcasses of two bastards swinging from a pair of yard-arms, well, he thought he would have to strangle a couple of those eight brave men with his own little hands and, after removing their white livers with a carving knife, withdraw from the world to an old woman's home!

Four men to one! Why, four brave men could slit the devil's throat. . . . Now, how to do it? As he saw it, they would have to wait until dark. As soon as night came they could go up the forecastle ladder without committing suicide. If anybody had any better suggestion let him open his mouth and speak.

The man named Ball, a lean, leathery man with a crooked nose, stepped up beside Dirque and faced the men. He spoke with his neck thrust out: And while they were waiting, while they were sitting tight till dark, what in the name of God was to prevent those two from crawling off with all the money!

This fixed the crew immovable; they stared the man in the eye, some instinctively slipping their knives out of their belts. After the first startled second, one of them whipped out his pistol with an oath that he would be damned in hell before he would let them make off with his money out of his very fingers.

Dirque's gun was on him.

The man drew up all of a sudden, as if he had been seized by the shoulders. Dirque waved him back with the barrel of his pistol and stepped to the foot of the ladder.

"Those two up the foremast will keep them from moving any treasure," said he, and started up the ladder.

That they might be moving the treasure was, he thought, not impossible. The jolly-boat hung from its davits across the stern; it could be lowered until it was on a level with the two windows in the rear of the cabin and be loaded there, quietly and out of sight of the crew. Afterwards it could be dropped into the creek and rowed ashore. And those six brave men might stay there for hours, afraid to put their heads out on a deserted deck.

But the men aloft would make it much more difficult for the officers to get the boat lowered. He wanted, if possible in a quick glance, to see where they were. He had another motive, too, for going up the ladder: he did not like the attitude of Ball. Ball had more influence than was best. Dirque felt certain that a reminder of his own strength would establish his power and eliminate the threat of a division. He climbed the ladder, put his head quickly out and back, and was leader from then on. The bullets ripped by scarcely half an inch above his head; two men stepped up to catch him.

"They ain't taking off the treasure," he said, and came back down the ladder, captain.

He waved them to sit down.

"Now I say wait. I say wait till it's dark."

He spoke slowly at first, as thought he were not quite sure what the best plan was; then he went on more rapidly.

As soon as it was dark they could go out on deck in safety. Here was his plan. Go on deck as still as cats. To the larboard rail on account of the list to starboard. Over the bulwarks and aft along the narrow projection of the deck beyond the rail. As still as cats. Aft until they reached the stern. There were two windows in the rear of the cabin. They would be open because even bastards would have to breathe. Two men would be lowered on a rope until they were on a level with the windows. These two men, suspended behind the windows with a pair of pistols each, should be able to see them—probably see them looking through the forward windows guarding the deck. They should be able to finish the work on the spot.

HE WOULD be one of the two himself. Who would be the other? He wanted a man who could hit a target illuminated by candle-light. But, on second thought, they might be too cautious to have a candle; he wanted a man who could hit a whisper at ten paces.

When he stopped talking there was a moment of silence.

In the midst of this silence came a soft, scraping noise from the stern, as though a piece of wood were being pushed over the deck. In a second it ceased, and everything was silent again.

They all switched their eyes to the bit of blue sky revealed by the opening at the end of the ladder. Dirque quieted them with his hand and listened. There was no sound but their own breathing.

He crept toward the ladder, stopped at the foot of it and listened once more. Then he climbed the ladder again, slowly, until his head was just below the deck. If the boat were being lowered he could have heard the squeaking of the blocks. He could hear nothing. He shook his head at the men watching him from below.

They began talking among themselves, softly at first, then more eagerly. Ball, who had suggested that the officers were making away with their treasure, advanced his theory again and forfeited it with proofs of its practicability. The sound they had heard was the chocks being slipped from beneath the gig as they got ready to lower it.

Dirque craned his head slowly above the deck, looking towards the boat hung on the stern. He was just beginning to see the tops of the davits; in another moment he could have beheld the railing on the break of the poop and the form of Nicholas lying prone beyond it.

There was a shot from the stern.

Dirque dropped his head. The crew were suddenly silent.

Then they heard some commotion in the foremast. A moment later a knife came thumping to deck out of the crosstrees.

Ball bounded past Dirque, up the ladder, and put his head out of the hatchway. A bullet from the cabin took him straight through the head and knocked him back one the shoulders of the crew.

"Hell's hinges!" shouted Dirque in cold wrath.

He sprang at him as he lay on the floor and extinguished what life might have been left in him by a thundering kick with his boot between the man's shoulder-blades. Then he whirled on the four that remained in a fury that none dared meet.

The next man who acted without his orders he would shoot point-blank. This was no time for putting their noses into every rat-trap that was offered to them; when he wanted a man to stick his head in front of Quinn's muzzle he would tell him so. He had no hands to waste on devil-bedamned curiosity. When the time came to act he would need them all. Until he told them what to do, they would do nothing!

They were now five in the forecastle and one aloft. He knew that only one

was left in the rigging, because he knew that neither Quinn nor Waine would miss a stationary target. Why the man stayed aloft, he was puzzled to say; perhaps he was only wounded. At any rate, he was to be counted out: he had no need for wounded men.

But they had six men left. And six was enough to get the treasure, and six was enough to divide it. All right! Now let them set their patient carcasses down on the floor and wait. The next man who tried to go up that ladder would die —or else an old sea-dog had lost his aim.

WHEN Nicholas looked aloft into the foretop, obscured by the net of cordage laced among the spars and just visible beneath the lower edge of the still unfurled maintopsail, it seemed empty. The shrouds were empty. No one clung to the lower yards. Yet he was certain that up there somewhere, motionless in that maze of rigging, a man was watching him—waiting for him to move from under the boom. The sun was shining almost directly beyond the foremast; the fore-crosstrees was the one spot in the mast that he could not examine, due to the sun's blazing behind it. He thought the man must be in the crosstrees.

He would wait until the sun dropped, or until the cloud beneath it rose and shaded it. And if he loved his life he would wait motionless; he was sheltered by the spanker boom, but the least movement to either side would leave him clearly visible.

He wondered if the lookout were really still up the mast; he might have slipped down the shrouds during the first confusion and escaped Quinn's notice. The only reason he had for thinking that the lookout was still there was that Dirque had tilted back his head, and Dirque might have done that to deceive them.

He did not know, and there was no way of knowing except by waiting for the crosstrees to become visible, and this would not be until the sun changed. It would be a difficult shot even then, with the yards and sheets intervening. And there was always the chance that no one was there and that he was exposing himself needlessly to a shot from the forecastle hatchway. But he would wait.

He lay on his chest under the shadow of the boom and watched a white bird sailing over the marsh, its colorless wings straight out from its body, pivoting it now and then with a slight movement of the darker tips as it came nearer, then peacefully drifted away. The marsh mud had begun to appear as the tide receded, and so still was the air that even at that distance he could hear it popping as it dried—popping like the far-off cocking of a thousand pistols.

The bird mounted from the grass once more, this time flying towards the brig. Nicholas leaned out of the shadow, idly watching it draw closer. It swept over the Inlet, a hundred yards beyond the bow, then pushed itself higher and circled back towards the foremast.

Suddenly it swooped up in the air and sped away. Nicholas snapped back under the boom. Something in the fore-crosstrees had undoubtedly frightened it.

Then the shadow of the boom melted into the deck as the cloud covered the sun. Nicholas looked into the foremost rigging and saw the man.

One foot was hooked behind a ratline in the topmast shrouds and he was sitting in the crosstrees. He was apparently watching the door of the cabin, though Nicholas could not see for certain because his head was hidden by the mainmast. In the hand which rested on the yard was his pistol, held tense as though he had heard a sound and were waiting for its repetition. Nicholas was glad his own pistol was already cocked, for the sound would have given him away; as it was, he thought the man had not seen him.

The cloud was passing across the sun; a minute more and his target would have

been drowned in the flood of light. Nicholas leveled his gun. As he pulled the trigged, there flashed through his mind the thought of what effect the report would have on the forecastle. If Quinn were not watching the hatchway, a bullet from there could drive between the posts of the railing and split him lengthwise. But it was too late now; his charge was fired.

The man in the crosstrees flung his pistol away to grab his breast; he wavered, then dropped over and his foot hung in the shrouds, leaving him suspended there, head down, as his knife fell in front of the forecastle.

Then two things happened simultaneously; as Quinn's shot burst from the cabin window there was a whiz by Nicholas's ear and a jab, and a knife stood quivering in the deck three inches from his chin, the handle vibrating like a plucked string on a harp.

Nicholas was taken completely by surprise. The thud of the knife point as it jammed into the deck startled him back under the boom. So there was another man in the mast! Well, Nicholas had another pistol in his belt. Even before the outline of the knife had hardened Nicholas had the pistol in his hand and cocked. Then the sun burst out again and absorbed his target.

Nicholas thereupon proceeded in a perfectly characteristic way. He reasoned that the man had no pistol, or he would not have thrown his knife; he had no weapon at all now: the man was harmless. There was a chance that he did have a pistol and a chance that he had a second knife; Nicholas took the chance for the sake of gesture. He stood upright on the quarterdeck, calmly descended.

For the self-possessed swagger with which he did it he might have been playing to an audience of thousands instead of to one lone man up the mast of a treasure ship, grounded in a deserted inlet—one lone man and himself, and the man formed an insignificant part of the spectators.

He bolted the hatchway and told Daniel to serve some of the food which they had stored away in the lockers. He stood at the window with a pistol laid over the deck, empty except for the two men sprawled on it half-way to the opening of the forecastle, while the captain dined. After a time they changed places and he ate while the captain watched.

"A total of six brave men and true," he said meditatively, leaning back on the seat beneath the stern windows. "One aloft and five below—and all most likely to stay where they are until they are moved either by night or by their gallant officers—their two gallant officers."

He held a glass of wine to the light and spoke to it as a man might speak to his dog.

"Their gallant Captain Quinn, and their gallant first officer, Mr. Waine."

The captain did not like him when he talked thus; there was laughter in it somewhere, not seen or heard or really felt, but still undoubtedly there. It made the captain vaguely uncomfortable; Nicholas seemed to be hiding from him and likely to spring out at him when he did not expect it. The way Nicholas had of calling him "my captain," made Quinn look for a twinkle in Nicholas's eyes, but the twinkle was never there.

Quinn flung Nicholas a frown and grasped the butt of his pistol more tightly. He might have turned from the window and pulled the trigger in Nicholas's face—might, except that he knew very well he should never then escape from the ship with his life. If he had any chance of escaping now, with six men against two.

But what worried him was that he knew Nicholas alone would stand a better chance of escaping than he alone, and he knew that every additional member of the crew whom he shot made him, the captain, just so much less essential to Nicholas.

Nicholas had insisted that Quinn dine first, on the principle of rank, but Quinn did not like the manner in which he insisted; that vague laugh was there again.

"Daniel, smartly, my lad," he said, "a light repast for our Captain Quinn, who will dine while your master keeps the wolves from the door."

It hung in the captain's head.

"But what worries their gallant officers," Nicholas went on, half to the wineglass, half to the captain, "is the manner of moving them before night reinforces their number, for six men are twenty through night's magnifying glass."

He took a sip of the wine and put the glass back on the table.

"The only plan I have to offer has many drawbacks. I might suggest moving one, or possibly both, of those gentlemen lying on our doorstep and carrying them home to the forecastle, if only they were now in the state they will be in day after tomorrow. But, as they are, they won't move their friends—and, upon second thought, they might not move them even day after tomorrow, for it is well known that the noses of our children, captain, resemble brass howitzers not only in their hue, but in their sensitiveness to smell."

Nicholas put his feet on the table and gazed for a while out of the stern windows at the desolate islands. Daniel sat on a powder-keg wiping out a pistol and drinking in Nicholas's words in speechless admiration. After some silence Nicholas turned his eyes back into the shadowy cabin and continued.

"Now, if we fused a keg of powder and rolled it down the forecastle ladder —no. The explosion would probably annihilate us as well—no. And even if we stepped on deck the man aloft would tell them we were coming, up the ladder they would fly, five bullets against two—no. If we sent Daniel aloft—oh, no."

His voice gradually became inaudible and resolved itself into thinking. In a moment he spoke aloud again:

"Wait for night. I see no way round it. As soon as it is dark they will come up the ladder. We may rely upon that. Well, we must be waiting for them as they come up.

"There are three hours before the sun sets; I should suggest that we use them in sorting this 'disputed wealth.' I see the barometer is rising, Captain Quinn."

OUTSIDE, the air was changing. The single cloud that lay in the sky when Nicholas was on deck had melted into a thin vapor that was creeping slowly over the blue of the heavens. The sun faded; the keen edges of the shadows softened.

The twisting Inlet ran blue to the sea, then clouded into gray and turned cold. The marsh-grass lifted up its innumerable spears, now almost yellow in the sun, now a rusty black.

The air was becoming warmer—a sultry, moist warm. There was no wind; the grass was motionless, the trees on the short were still, as if praying. Along the summit of the low hill hung a ribbon of light.

Slowly the shade came down on the marshes, out of the gray mist standing silent over the sun. The clouds thickened in the west and twilight fell before the sun had set.

The captain and Nicholas left the windows and selected their pistols.

"Daniel," said Nicholas, "you will take a pistol and climb the foremast shrouds. You will move as quietly as if you were in the cabin and I were asleep. When you hear a shot on deck you will kill the man who will be waiting for you on one of the yards. You have now one purpose in life, do you understand me? Your one purpose is to shoot one man. Here, where are you?"

"Maussah."

"Can you shoot with this pistol?"

Nicholas put out a gun in the dark and felt it grasped.

"Yassah."

"Scared?"

"Nawsah."

They waited by the windows until the two men lying on the deck became invisible. When the mainmast disappeared in darkness Nicholas opened the door and stepped out on deck without a sound. They had taken off their shoes and moved slowly forward in their stockinged feet. Nicholas led the way. He did not walk on his toes; it would have tired him, and he felt would not have been so soundless as walking on his whole foot, lowering his heel gently to the deck and lifting his toe carefully to prevent even the whisper of cloth over wood.

The only sound that might have warned the forecastle was the creaking of a loose plank, and Nicholas felt the firmness of each board before putting his weight on it. It was too dark to be seen. Nicholas thought once that he was alone—that Quinn had gone back; he looked behind him and could see nothing; there was no noise.

Then Quinn's outstretched fingers tapped him on the shoulder. Even if a man were looking from the opening of the forecastle he would have had no premonition of their presence.

The water was humming by the hull, and once the vessel shuddered as the rising tide loosened her keel in the mud. The deck fell away several degrees to starboard, as though a wind were blowing full from port and she careened under the spread of her sails. Nicholas led the way along the lower side. When they came abreast of the foremast they saw a blur through the forecastle hatch, as though a shaded candle burned below.

Nicholas put his hand behind him to stop Quinn. They placed themselves a few feet away from the opening, directly in front of it, and, muffling their pistols under their shirts, cautiously cocked them and waited. Nicholas could hear the captain breathing beside him and the tide running in; not a sound came from the forecastle.

Nicholas waited on his knees, staring at the glow and listening intently for some movement. There was no sign that life existed beyond the stairs. Nicholas could have waited indefinitely had it not been for one fear. Daniel, who by then should have been half-way of the shrouds, would undoubtedly wait to fire at his target until Nicholas's signal; the first shot would be like lighting the fuse of a mine and Daniel would know that Nicholas intended to light it himself. Daniel would wait.

But what if the man in the crosstrees, in desperation, provoked a fight? Nicholas decided to wait no longer.

He crept on his hands to the hatchway and looked down. The glow was too dim to reveal anything. He lowered himself to his stomach and put his head as far down the stairs as he could. Nothing moved; nothing made any sound. The candle burned on the table like a drop of gold.

The thought then struck Nicholas for the first time that the forecastle was empty—that the crew had already come on deck!

He switched his head round and looked vainly into the dark. Where on deck were they? For all he knew they might be waiting near. He drew quickly back into the shadow. Then he knew they were not near or he would never have brought a sound head out of the hatchway light.

On second thought, they would not have remained near the forecastle anyway; if they came out it would be for no reason but to go aft to the cabin. And the cabin door, he recalled with a gasp, was open.

Nicholas hurriedly felt his way back to Quinn and breathed in his ear. With the crew in the cabin, he and Quinn were as good as hanged already; they would have food and treasure and as much ammunition and arms as they could use. Their lives were forfeited if the crew got past the open door; they had just as

well spend their lives keeping them out.

While he was whispering, there came to his ear the soft tap of a man's boot. It came from aloft and was repeated slowly but regularly. At first Nicholas thought it was Daniel, though the sound came from the port shrouds; Daniel might have gone to the foretop, failed to see the man, and come down on the opposite side.

The sound grew louder, though it was always faint, and in a moment ceased, as if the man had reached the bulwarks. The tapping was not repeated, but Nicholas felt some one drawing near. The person was very careful; Daniel would have been very careful.

"Pst!" said Nicholas.

There was a sharp intake of breath not a yard away, then the man knelt beside them.

"Dirque?" he said.

Quinn seized him by the throat and Nicholas stabbed him. It was not fatal, and the man gave a loud groan before Nicholas could strike him again.

There was a movement from the stern and a sound of hurried whispering.

"The time has come," said Nicholas in a melodramatic whisper to the captain. Quinn could have sworn Nicholas's teeth were bare in a smile. "Wake your gun, my captain; the final curtain is about to rise."

For more than a minute they scarcely breathed. Then near the port shrouds they heard a light swish, as of hand brushed against the gunwales. Nicholas fired and leaped aside. There was a yell from a man, and from beside him the blinding flash of a pistol. Quinn fired at the flash and there was a thud on the deck.

Nicholas clutched Quinn's arm and pulled him to the starboard bulwarks and along them back towards the cabin. The three of the crew that remained must at all cost be kept out of the cabin.

When they reached the waist of the ship they heard a word spoken at the stern. Nicholas drew Quinn against the side of the deck-house. They listened for a moment but heard nothing more. Then Nicholas took a small pen-knife from his pocket.

"Fire at the flash," said Nicholas. "Ready."

He tossed the knife lightly over towards the port railing.

At once the still night seemed to explode. Two spurts of flame came from the poop, one near the wheel, one nearer the waist. The reports came as close together as the foot-falls of a man running; the fire flashed orange, stabbing two wounds in the heart of night. The bullets rattled down the port scuppers, where he had thrown the knife.

Scarcely had the dark closed over the flashes when Quinn split it wide again and dropped on the deck. Nicholas fired almost simultaneously. There was a noise as of a man's fingernails tearing across wood, then silence, then a resounding splash in the water.

All this had happened in about the space of time between two winks of an eye. The four pistol shots seemed to unite to create on echo. In contrast the silence that followed seemed long, though it probably lasted hardly long enough for the spray from the man's fall into the Inlet to return again to the water.

It was broken this time by a burst of flame from the cabin door, and Nicholas heard a ball singe over his prone figure and ricochet off the deck behind him. The door was slammed and bolted before either he or Quinn could pull a trigger, and silence fell again, as heavy as the dark that falls when the last candle in a room is extinguished.

NICHOLAS remained on the deck without moving for several minutes. The disaster of finding a man actually in the cabin stunned him. He had feared it, but hoped against it. But, he reasoned, the man in the cabin must be alone. The

only shot the result of which was doubtful was Quinn's shot at the flash from the stern.

It was a long shot for accuracy, even if the flash had burned longer and illuminated the target. If the bullet had struck it might not have been fatal—though there was no movement or sound such as might have come from a wounded man. If he were dead, then the man in the cabin was the last of the twelve.

Nicholas knew the survivor must be Dirque; if some one were to go into the cabin he thought Dirque would go himself. Dirque was in the cabin alone and was, Nicholas believed, the last of the twelve.

By good luck the end seemed to be at length in sight, the end he had planned. Everything had developed perfectly and Nicholas was as sound and whole as he had ever been in his life. The only way in which the situation might have been bettered was in respect to Quinn: Quinn was sound and whole, too, and Quinn should have been wounded.

Nicholas planned to go home in the morning; he could rely on Daniel, and Quinn, watched by Daniel, might be safe. But Daniel was to row him up the Inlet until he could land and walk, and might have to row him five miles—more. What would Quinn be doing while both of them were away? The treasure had never been reckoned; Quinn could hide away a quarter of it and no one be the wiser. And what would Quinn think of Nicholas's leaving him?

For Nicholas was resolved to return alone; he intended to prepare the family somewhat before Quinn should be received. Quinn should have been wounded—not seriously, but so as to be incapacitated for a week or two. Nicholas could then depart on a pretext of going for help and, while he was gone, he could know that Quinn would remain quite harmless in his bed.

But Quinn must not be killed; upon this point Nicholas had made up his mind. His being wounded was only a matter of convenience; it was really, Nicholas argued, brought on by Quinn himself for failing to inspire trust in Nicholas's breast.

He had seen Quinn whirl on him in the cabin. It was spontaneous distrust. On the surface, allies; below, instinctive enemies. But Quinn should not die. Not then. Quinn was different from the crew. Quinn was nearer his own equal—in the matter of skill, that is; not taking in the matter of family.

Quinn, whoever he was, was worthy to be fought in open day. Such a fight, he felt, was eventually to come, and he was not the sort to dodge it by doing away with a worthy opponent through treachery. This would have been cowardice, and whatever came to him under even a veil of cowardice, that it was his one principle to thrust aside. And he thrust aside the temptation of killing Quinn now, thrust it aside instantly. Quinn must not die.

But Quinn wounded would be of great convenience. There would still be some firing; perhaps even yet Quinn might fall.

He was aroused sharply by a hand on his shoulder. It was a heavy hand, but it touched him gently.

"Maussah?" said a whisper. "Maussah daid?"

Nicholas sat up.

"No, maussah isn't dead. Be careful; Dirque's in the cabin."

Nicholas drew him into the shelter of the deck-house.

"How many pistols have you?"

"One, two, t'ree," said Daniel.

"Keep one," said Nicholas. "Give me two and three."

He felt for Daniel's head and put his lips against his ear.

"You are going to shoot Captain Quinn. Do you understand?"

Daniel nodded his head as calmly as if Nicholas had been ordering coffee for breakfast.

"But you are not going to kill him—not, you understand?"

Daniel nodded.

"Flesh wound. Can you do it?"

"Dan'l try, maussah."

"When I whistle."

"Waine?" whispered Quinn.

"Here," replied Nicholas. "We have come to our final task, my captain."

"He will surrender," said Quinn.

"If I were he," breathed Nicholas, "if I were he, what should I do? Let's go talk to him."

The three went aft very quietly. When they reached the wall of the cabin Nicholas put his ear to the door and listened. Everything was silent. He was about to hail the man inside when there was a short quick scratch, as of flint on steel.

Taken alone, it might have meant almost anything, but it was followed by a dim flicker on the side of the small opening in the window, and any doubts that Nicholas might have had about the identity of the man in the cabin were dispelled forever. It was Dirque. None of the others would have acted with much decision, and striking a light was decision.

The glow disappeared. The sound of a boot scraping against wood came from the depths of the cabin, and the thought of the magazine burst into Nicholas's mind! Dirque had fired the magazine and was climbing through the stern port!

Nicholas sprang up the steps to the poop and across it to the taffrail. As he reached it he heard a rope squeaking from below as with a weight. He found the end of the rope that was tied round the rail and fired down its length with both his pistols. There was a yell and a loud splash, as if a body had fallen into the water on its back.

Nicholas heard Quinn running towards him. He dropped over the rail, clinging to the rope.

"Look out; he's armed!" cried Nicholas, and whistled.

There was a flash from the break of the poop. Nicholas heard Quinn curse his assailant and roll to the deck.

Nicholas lowered himself quickly to the level of the stern window. In the middle of the cabin was what looked like a glowworm crawling swiftly over the floor. Even as he looked the spark grew into a flame.

For an instant he watched it, thinking of the infernal destruction that would follow if he were too late. He could save his life by sliding down the rope into the water.

The flame brightened.

An instant later Nicholas was through the window and holding the loose fuse in his fingers.

Victory was his. He had won; he, in his own right, was a man of fortune! He lighted a lantern and cast his eyes about the cabin. Then he swept his arms wide in a gesture of possession and his white teeth glistened.

"A man and his might," said he. "A man and his might. The world bends its knee and bids him do with it what he will."

NICHOLAS carried the lantern to the poop where the captain lay. Daniel had torn off Quinn's shirt and was kneeling beside him.

"Flesh woun', maussah."

Nicholas placed the lantern on the deck so that its light fell on the wound.

"Only through the flesh, Captain Quinn," said Nicholas. "He is gone now."

"May the devil torture his soul," muttered Quinn.

"Amen," said Nicholas. "Daniel, the medicine-chest. Smartly, my lad."

What with reading and plenty of chance to practice, Nicholas had acquired a good deal of medical knowledge and skill. He cleaned and dressed the captain's wound with nimble fingers, applying himself earnestly to saving him.

When Nicholas had made the bandage secure, Daniel picked the captain up in

his arms and carried him to his bunk in the cabin. Nicholas gave him something in a glass, and in a few minutes the sound of his moving ceased and he slept.

Nicholas sat down under the stern windows and ate some food that Daniel brought him. He was tired. His head was tired—tired in the sense of needing rest without apparently desiring it, as a fasting man soon ceases to long for food. He sat for a good while in silence, with a bottle of wine standing between the lantern and his eyes. There beneath his feet lay the treasure, enough for half a dozen fortunes. There sat he, miraculously whole. He had won. But he was no longer elated.

This puzzled him. He drank half of the wine before he began to speak.

"Only children can win." The words seemed to rouse him and he looked at Daniel with some of his old manner. "I hear you ask 'Why?' Daniel. Listen. My eyes are stronger; I can see farther—must see farther. And when I win, I see not far ahead the loss that must come before I can win again; for continued winning isn't winning at all. . . . But only children can lose, too, for when I lose I see victory not far away."

After a moment Nicholas went on:

"Daniel," said he, "tomorrow you will row your master home."

"De Big House not so fur off, maussah?"

"Not so far. And tomorrow you will row me home."

He was silent for a space, looking at the light through the wine bottle. Daniel made such an admirable audience, never grasping the conversation to himself, listening in mystery and admiration, worshipful, desiring nothing but Nicholas's approval.

"You would like to see the house again, the sun shining on the porch, the swing beneath the oak trees—you would like to swing again, now wouldn't you?"

"Um. Too heavy to swing us now, maussah."

Nicholas looked at him sharply.

"Daniel, stand closer. In you, Daniel, I see a spring of wisdom. 'Too heavy to swing us now.' You will get a glass from the locker, Daniel, the gallant Mr. Grave's glass, and will join me in drinking a toast of wine to yourself."

They drank. Then Nicholas stood up and poured them another glass.

"And now we will drink a toast to me."

"Maussah."

They drank. Nicholas put his glass back on the table. Daniel retired into the shadow.

Nicholas began to pace slowly up and down the cabin as if he were the hero in a play.

"Tomorrow we shall return. And won't they be glad to see us come! Ah, won't they! What rejoicing, Daniel, when they learn that even kings and queens have contributed to our fortune!"

He laughed, then became grave again.

"Our fortune is made. We have conquered. We have reached the star. And now we shall pillow our heads on the clouds—No; not yet. Already a wondering begins to torture my soul: what lies on *yonder* star? One more star, and then one more, and so progressing, Daniel, until the Spectre draws his long pistol from his cape of clouds and says, 'Not so, enough,'—and, disputing with him, we fall."

Nicholas sat down again on the seat beneath the window and folded his arms on the table.

"No, Daniel," said he. "I think we shall not tarry at home for long. Not while the sea is blue."

He waved him away.

"Call me at six."

"Maussah."

HIS homecoming was a memorable event. It would have been memorable enough merely for having a wandering son return home; there was no need for

additional drama. But one of the first failings of Nicholas was a love of drama; he worshipped critical moments, and it could hardly be expected of him that he should allow such an opportunity as this to go by unused.

All day an east wind had been whipping up the surf along the outer fringes of the Sound, until by afternoon the breakers surging round the Head were a solid blanker of foam. Off and on through the morning and early afternoon light misty showers of cold rain obliqued down on the wind.

Waine, as he not unusually did on such dim, blustery days as this, wrapped himself in a seaman's cloak and proceeded to the height of land on Hilton Head. Whether he still carried Nicholas in his mind is doubtful; more than likely he simply delighted in seeing the changes that had come over the ocean.

To the east, southeast, and south the water was speckled with white-caps, as though some one from above were dropping handfuls of pebbles. To the northeast, across the channel, was shallow water with breakers charging over the hidden banks like bulls with white necks. Beyond the end of the channel, running in a course almost due south, was a ship that looked like an Englishman-o'-war. Except for this vessel, the water was empty. As dark descended the wind increased and the ship put about and steered for the open ocean. Waine returned home moodily, the skirts of his large cloak flapping about his calves.

At ten o'clock Mrs. Waine had gone to bed. Caroline, beside a lamp near the fire, worked pensively at knitting, now and then stopping to look at the nearly consumed log on the fire and listen to the turbulence outside. Waine, in the shadow, smoked his final evening pipe, scowling at the flames. The doors and windows had been made fast against the weather. The servants had gone to their quarters. The fire needed replenishing. The only sounds were the clock in the hall, the flurried clicking of Caroline's needles, and the whir of the wind among the garden trees.

Then, of a sudden, the placid expression in Caroline's eyes changed. Waine was still glowering at the fire, the blue smoke of his tobacco flowing lazily about, then swirling down and up the chimney.

A moment later someone walked boldly across the porch and turned the knob of the front door. When the bolt was found to be drawn, the handle was shaken and an authoritive knock sent echoing down the hall.

Waine sprang to his feet in anger at such rudeness, planting himself before the fire facing the door into the hall and clutching the stem of his white pipe so as nearly to break it. In a moment he walked to the cord that hung by the fireplace and rang for his butler.

Moses shortly came hurrying from below stairs and opened the upper half of the front door. Seeing a man quite obviously a gentleman, though a stranger to him, he opened the rest of the door and bowed him in.

Without a word the man unfastened a heavy black cape and allowed the negro to lift it from his shoulders. He was tall, slender and fine. His narrow face was burned by the sun, which gave it a hardiness it probably would not otherwise have possessed. He wore gray gloves upon his long hands and his shoes and garments were those of a landsman, but there was something about him, about the way in which he stood there for an instant with his feet slightly apart as if ready for a plunge of the floor below him, about the very set of his shoulders, that suggested the sea.

There was a scar along the left of his forehead at the edge of his hair, scarcely visible, almost eradicated by time. A thin, elegant rapier hung at his side.

When he had been relieved of his cloak he began leisurely and smilingly to pull at the fingers of his gloves. Then he

handed them to the negro and said, in a voice as cool as steel:

"Moses, I am Mr. Nicholas Waine."

As he said it the elder Waine stepped into the hall.

For a minute they stood apart, looking at each other. The old man was stunned. He could not utter a sound. They stood there staring at each other with the clock ticking, one with a frown, the other with an amused smile—one unnerved, the other with all the self-possession of the wicked.

After a time Nicholas stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "I have the honor of being your long-lost son."

Waine stared at him a second longer, then flung his arms about the youth's neck and dropped his head upon his son's shoulder. . . .

The fire was remade. The mother was called in exquisite joy to come down; and once more Nicholas sat in the midst of those who loved him.

Where had he been? Was he well? What was his occupation?

He was an officer in the navy, his father guessed.

The questions of why he had run away from school, why he had not written them, why he had decided to return home, were not thought of.

Nicholas sat there, the center of interest, amused, aloof, patronizing. With his cool eyes in something of a twinkle, he discoursed to them in double meanings. He had traveled in his wanderings the whole world round. He had fought, conquered, and risen. He was second in command of his ship, then lying at anchor just out of the Sound.

"A frigate," said his father, in explanation to the others. "I marked her off the Head this afternoon."

Nicholas laughed.

She was loaded, he said, with a rather valuable cargo of one thing and another, collected here and there on her voyages. But she was old and leaky; she had seen her best days—and so had he—and now he was thinking of getting paid off and taking up the peaceful cultivation of rice.

His father frowned at him, puzzled.

There was in his talk a cutting humor. He laughed at what he had been through and described himself in bits of experience as he might have described a poor tragedian at whom the audience, including himself, was inclined to scoff. There was something frightening about his humor—something akin to the flashes of light in a hurricane. It brightened but it did not warm. But in the glow of love for the returned son the family did not seem to feel the spirit of his narrative.

He ran briefly over a story of travel and adventure, never going into particulars, but relating it all with an inclusive generality, allowing them to surmise their own details. He hurried through what else he had to say and speciously brought himself back home.

And now what he wanted to know was, might he bring up to *Wythewood* the master of this ship, whom he had left that afternoon lying in his cabin with a pistol bullet in his back.

Nicholas threw this off with a frigid calmness and a smile at the change it brought over the room. As for the effect on the family, the pistol might just have been fired in their midst.

The old man spoke first and with a touch of anger.

"Why didn't you say this long ago! God, sir, he may be dead by now!"

"You say that because you don't know my Captain Quinn, *mon pere*," said Nicholas unperturbed. "I sometimes think that man will never die."

THE settlement at Port Royal Town had prospered.

The street along the waterfront, Bay Street, or The Bay, as it was usually called, was lined with shops and offices. The southern end had become the haven for seamen on shore, principally on account of its being the

location of the five-gabled refuge known as Ye Topsail Tavern. The northern part appertained as much to the land as this part to the sea. Here were the hall in which court was held, the lawyers' offices, the office of the Governor of the Port.

Across the Sound, an hour's sail with a fair breeze, was the island of Hilton Head, where the more well-to-do, under the leadership of Waine, had built their residences. There were about a dozen at this time, scattered thinly along the Sound and on the salt creeks that cut into the land. About a mile away from the Sound, on the edge of a heavy forest, with a clear view of the Atlantic from its eastern gate, they had erected the small brick church of St. Helena's Parish and adorned it with some splendor.

Some days Waine devoted entirely to the affairs at *Wythewood,* such a day usually being followed by a visit to Port Royal at ten o'clock the next morning. The day Nicholas returned, Waine had spent on the Island; but when he went to bed at night he decided that, in honor of his son's coming back home, he would depart from a custom of years and spend two days in succession at *Wythewood.*

When Ol' Tom knocked on his door the next morning at seven, bearing on a tray a small pot of fragrant coffee to sustain him until breakfast an hour later, his first word was to ask if coffee had been taken to his son's room.

The negro declared that Moses had that minute gone down the hall with a tray exactly like his own.

Waine rose at once. He sniffed hurriedly a few times in the vapor that rose from the steaming coffee, then seated himself in a chair near the freshly-kindled fire.

"He's growed, I reck'n," observed Ol' Tom, fastening a towel round Waine's neck, preparatory to shaving him.

"Six feet now," said Waine.

"Lawdy, Lawd! An' I've seed him run under a hawse's belly."

"He's a sailor," said the father, in a voice that called attention to itself through its effort to appear indifferent. "First officer on a large English ship. It's good for a young man. Gets him up early in the morning. He's probably downstairs now wondering where his breakfast is."

Waine was, in truth, delighted at Nicholas's return. Whatever vague misgivings he had had the night before, after thinking the matter over, he dispelled with the certainty that Nicholas could and would explain everything when the opportunity came. He thought of the companionship that Nicholas's presence would afford him—the companionship of an intelligent man.

He thought of the ideal relationship that might develop between them—friends, yet closer than friends. Once, for a moment, he wondered how Nicholas could bring himself to give up the independence of a life at sea for the quiet of helping him manage the plantations; for Nicholas had spoken of leaving the sea. He thought it was rather noble of him to return of his own accord. Things seemed to have worked out for the best.

Waine descended the stairs more quickly than usual and when he entered the dining-room looked about it expectantly. Then he went to the blazing logs and warmed his back.

He was in this position when he caught sight of a note lying on top of his coffee-cup.

It was from Nicholas. It read:

My Esteemed Father.
Sir:—

Capt Quinn, of whm I spoke to you last evening, will be delivered at yr hospitable threshold some time to-day. It is unfortunately necessary for me to be absent a while longer, that I may conduct his ship to Chrs Town and there enter into negotiations for her overhauling etc., etc., looking to the time of the Capt's recovery and his wishing to take her to sea again. I understand that there is a weekly packet running to Port Royal from Chrs Town; I will take passage on her as soon as I can. In the meantime,

may I beg that Capt Quinn be spared the pain of recounting how he came by his wound; it happened in a lamentable affair on board his vessel, wch he is naturally disinclined to recall. All this will be made clear to you as soon as possible by him who has the honor to subscribe himself,

Dr Sir,
Yr M H & O St
& Son,
Nicholas Waine

To R. Waine of Wythewood, Esqre

Waine ate his solitary breakfast in some disappointment. Then he sent word to the negro in charge of his sloop that he would go to Port Royal at ten o'clock as usual.

As they were cutting across the Sound in open view of the ocean, Waine, standing to windward of the mast as he always did, saw once again the frigate of the day before. She was much closer in and, as he looked, he saw her srtike her royals, as if she were preparing to come up the Sound.

SHORTLY after noon the frigate marched up the channel, dropped her starboard anchor, swung wide on her cable, dropped her port anchor, hauled in, and faced the tide, as a great dog might stalk into his kennel, turn slowly round, and lie down with his head at the door. A boat was lowered immediately, and the commanding officer went to Port Royal to pay his respects to the Governor.

Mrs. Waine watched the maneuvers, standing at the window in which the single candle had been set so many years before. The hand she laid on the sill was trembling. She called to Caroline to bring Waine's telescope and find Nicholas. As the boat was being lowered she hastened into the room where the captain was to lie and turned back the bedclothes.

But the boat passed under the stern and up the river in the direction of the town.

In the afternoon, an hour before sunset, the small boat returned to the frigate, the anchors were weighed, and she marched with great dignity out of the Sound. Waine's sloop docked shortly afterwards, and he walked up the curving path from the pier as usual, with his hands in the pockets of his coat.

They had just finished a silent dinner. Waine had not spoken but had gazed at the flowers in the center of the table and wandered far away. There had been some talk among the others, though in a half-hearted manner. Subconsciously all were listening.

When Moses entered and announced that a negro was below with a man on his shoulder, they rose in unison and broke into conversation.

In a few minutes Quinn, in a deep sleep, had been laid on the bed in the guest-chamber, the coachman had dispatched a man for the doctor, and Daniel was gone. He slipped out without anyone's apparently having given him a glance, went softly through the front door, not to pass among the servants to be questioned, and disappeared up the beach.

When the doctor came, he examined Quinn and spoke for a while with Waine alone. The man was unconscious from a drug, he said, but would wake by morning no worse off for it and probably the better for having been quiet. The wound had been tended well and, though it seemed greatly irritated—had he come on a journey in that condition?—he thought it would not give any serious trouble. The man would be on his feet in ten days. He was a very hardy man, said the doctor; he might even walk in a week. He was tanned like a sailor.

"He *is* a sailor," said Waine. "Captain of a brig. Hurt in an accident."

The doctor nodded his head slowly and closed one eye for his own satisfaction; he had attended men before who had been hurt in "accidents," though they had invariably been shot from the front. But his patients had always been valiant

colonials; this man was a foreigner, and foreigners might lose their heads at the last moment—or the other man's finger might have slipped a second too soon.

But he asked no questions; the man was under Waine's roof, which in itself was voucher enough. He said he would return in the morning; Waine conducted him to the door and stood there for a moment, watching the lantern under the doctor's gig go swinging down the lane.

He turned back into the house and called Moses.

"Tell the man who brought the captain I want to see him," said he. "And put a new log on the fire."

In a few minutes Moses returned with the information that the man was not outside.

"Where is he?" said Waine.

"Gone, suh," replied Moses.

"Gone! Send somebody after him."

Half an hour later Waine rang again. Moses said that the man could not be found. Waine waited for an hour, then went to bed.

On his way to his room he stopped at the door of the guest-chamber where Quinn lay, opened it softly, and looked in. The negro, left there to wait on Quinn if he should wake and want anything, sat on a low stool before the fire, asleep; Quinn lay in the bed, just as the doctor had placed him.

Waine stepped into the room and looked at the figure of the captain for several minutes. Then he bent over and examined the face closely. He turned up the wick of the lamp and held it so that the light should fall clear on Quinn's forehead, then he pushed back the hair and peered intently at the paler skin along the edge of it.

In a moment he was satisfied. He turned the lamp low again, replaced it on the table, and went softly back into the dark hall with an easier heart.

He was prompted to this examination by something that had happened in Port Royal that morning.

WHEN he went to the Governor's office on The Bay for the purpose of joining the Governor in a glass of Scotch, he was told that the Governor was talking with two of the officers of the *Challenger*.

"Of the what?" said Waine.

"The *Challenger*," said Marshall. "The frigate that has just come in."

"Tell him who's here," said Waine.

The Governor came to the door and escorted Waine in.

He was presented to two naval officers, all striped and gilded and standing very erect with their hands behind them. One of them was Captain Blackhouse, the commanding officer of the *Challenger*, a business-like man of forty-five or fifty, with a well-shaped head; in his eyes there seemed to be a shadow of condescension towards the Governor and Waine, though it was probably not really directed at them so much as at the fact that they were civilians who did not recognize his rank.

The other was a much younger man; he apparently knew well what was expected of a junior officer, for he kept for the most part perfectly still. He was taller than the older man, and fuller across the chest. The commanding officer presented him to Waine as Lieutenant Winton. They gave the impression of being exceedingly uncomfortable, though not more than half realizing it.

"Gentlemen," said the Governor, sitting slowly down again and gently pinching his second chin, "Mr. Waine is a member of Council and a close friend of mine. It is only right that he should be among the first to hear about these men—"

"Tell him, tell him," said Captain Blackhouse, then proceeded to tell Waine himself. He had come in the name of His Majesty, God save him, to capture dead or alive the leaders and crew of a pirate ship called the *Esperanza*. She was well known among the fleet; they had probably heard of her themselves. He had happened upon the vessel nine or

ten days off the north coast of Africa and, recognizing her at once, had given chase until a fog descended and caused him to lose sight of her. Two days later he spoke to a brigantine that had seen her. Five days later a barque had given him further information. By hearsay, so to speak, he had tracked her to the Carolina coast. He felt certain that the *Esperanza* was now lying not many leagues away.

"I have here a description of the two leaders," he went on. The lieutenant handed Waine the document. "The master calls himself Captain James. He is tall, thin, with the manners of a gentleman. There is a scar—note this—at the edge of his hair just above his left temple, made by the blow of a cutlass. Reports conflict to some extent in regard to the mate, though it seems to be generally accepted that he is a man of average height and heavy build. Unfortunately, he seems to have no distinguishing mark, but the one who calls himself Captain James should be easy to recognize."

Captain Blackhouse went on to say that he thought it likely, or possible, that the men would come ashore, and he desired the Governor to have posted in various public places copies of the description. The lieutenant took a dozen copies from beneath his coat and put them on the Governor's desk. Thus, if the *Esperanza* put to sea, the frigate would apprehend them, and if they came near the town the Governor would apprehend them. He intended to call on the Governor of the Port of Charles Town and request him to do likewise; it was the duty of all loyal subjects to assist in capturing these outlaws.

"All ship-owners will be particularly interested in having them seized," said he, and looked at Waine.

"Decidedly," said Waine. "I have a brig on her maiden voyage that I expect in port by the end of the week; I should hate to have them cast profane eyes on her."

"Built for you in England?" asked the commanding officer, finishing his Scotch. And the conversation was changed.

At four-thirty the officers rose to go. Waine hoped he should have the pleasure of seeing them at dinner at *Wythewood.*

The likelihood that the frigate's mission might in any way affect him personally did not strike Waine until he was aboard his sloop returning to the Island. He wondered if the wounded Captain What's-his-name had come. Then the thought of the possible connection between this man and the pirate brig, *Esperanza,* crept about him and enclosed him like night. It stunned his brain and left him blind; he was looking at his pier taking form on the shore, but when the boat glided in beside it he was startled.

His first sight of Quinn, however, set his mind at some rest; when he searched for the distinguishing mark on his forehead and failed to find it, he was at peace once more. The thought had shaken him cruelly, but in an hour he was quiet and in two he was sound asleep.

FOR three days Quinn's mind was so befuddled that he could not decide whether he was delirious or sane.

One day he had lain in his bunk, wounded, on the shore of a supposedly uninhabited island; he seemed to be alone, though he was not sufficiently awake to be certain. Later, he did not know how much later, he heard the hollow thud of oars being dropped into the bottom of a small boat; in a moment he saw Nicholas at the cabin door.

"How is my Captain Quinn?" he said, casting his hat away and reaching for Quinn's pulse.

The negro had prepared food, Nicholas had eaten, then dressed the wound. He had poured Quinn a glass of wine, handed it to him, poured himself another, and sat on the table looking at it for a moment.

"For a toast, my captain," said he,

raising his head with his inimical smile, "suppose we drink to dead friends: friends are truest dead, and enemies never die!"

He laughed, drank the wine, and laughed again—not a bitter laugh, but one of honest amusement.

Quinn had drunk and, soon after, felt himself overcome by drowsiness.

When he opened his eyes again, he was lying on a soft bed and a fire was running brightly over an armful of logs in the fireplace. A negro waited on him, but not Daniel, and a doctor whom he had never seen before visited him and told him he was in no danger of dying. And several times he heard the swish of skirts by his door, and women's quiet voices.

The first day he accepted it all as a dream; the second he was perplexed by the consistency and apparent reality of it; and the third, though he was at a loss for an explanation, he had to admit that he was awake.

He had asked the negro once what it all meant, but, receiving in reply a flood of absolutely unintelligible guttural vowels, he decided that the man spoke another language and in his weakness said nothing more to him.

On the third afternoon there was a knock at his door and an elderly gentleman, entering, addressed to him courteously these astounding words:

"You are the master, sir, of my son's ship, I believe," said he.

Quinn begged his pardon and asked him if he would repeat what he had said. When Waine repeated it, Quinn declared cautiously that he was. He looked at Waine closely and decided that the matter was not a joke and that Waine was not a member of the crew disguised. Nicholas's father! He did not know Nicholas had a father. He wondered how long he had been senseless. Was he back in England?

Waine went on to say that any friend of his son was welcome, and that he considered himself especially fortunate in having under his roof his son's commanding officer. He hoped Quinn was comfortable. He, Waine, was a busy man and some of Quinn's desires might have been overlooked; if so he begged Quinn to mention them to the negro, who had orders to supply everything the captain could wish—everything that it was within the power of a colonial planter to supply. The doctor had told him that Quinn would be on his feet in a few more days, and he looked forward to the time when Quinn should be able to sit at table with him and his family.

Quinn expressed an earnest desire to see Nicholas.

"He has gone away for a few days," said Waine, "to take your ship on up to Charles Town. As soon as he comes back I will send him to you."

When Waine departed, Quinn looked for a long time out of the window.

So Nicholas had gone away again. He had doubtless returned to the brig, which must be lying, after all, not very far distant. Was it possible that Nicholas had deserted him? Had he gone back to the ship with the purpose of putting to sea with the treasure? He thought not. Even if Nicholas could find enough men to make up a crew, the vessel was fast aground; besides, provisions and water were low, and it would be difficult to replenish them from the country surrounded the spot where she lay.

He considered it not impossible that Nicholas might desire to desert him; he did not know, he could not fathom the man, but that he could not desert him by going to sea was clear.

If he were not planning to go to sea, he was unloading the treasure; this was the course they had decided to follow, anyway. He would bury the chests, make a map of the place, and return. He would probably bring with him as much of the specie as he could carry; this they would divide, and they would live ashore in comfort for a time and make their plans

for the future in luxurious leisure. He thought it was all right.

Two days later Mrs. Waine sent him a copy of the weekly *Gazette,* which had come out that morning, hoping that he might find something in it to while away his time. She called his attention to the problem in chess that was printed on the last page, and sent him a board and men with which to solve it. White was to mate in three moves, she said.

But, from the news that fell under Quinn's eye on the front page, he began to think of himself as the Red King and of the checkmate as being already accomplished.

It was the news of the *Challenger* in the Sound and the purpose of her call.

He read it three times, pausing for half an hour between readings. The cry was out. He was trapped. The fact that the identity of the captain and the mate had been confused had saved them thus far, but this mistake would be apparent the moment Nicholas returned.

QUINN convalesced with a rapidity that disheartened him; in spite of everything he could do, it seemed impossible for him to postpone his descent into the family until Nicholas returned.

Ten days after he was brought to the house, he was sitting in his room; the doctor told him that with reasonable luck he might in two days go downstairs. Two days later, when the doctor came to superintend his descent, Quinn was moaning in bed with an inexplicably high temperature. He thus postponed leaving his room for three days more. When the third day came, the fifteenth of his presence in the house, Quinn gave up all subterfuge and was assisted by the doctor and the negro servant to the ground floor.

Mrs. Waine and Caroline waited for him hospitably at the foot of the stairs.

"Well, God has brought me down at last, ma'am," said Quinn.

Mrs. Waine said she was gratified to see that his misfortune had not turned him away from the Almighty, who, he should remember, often moved in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform.

Quinn crossed himself.

"Too true, ma'am," said he. "Too true."

They went into the sun-room, overlooking the garden-terraces and the marshes.

Moses brought them tea.

After a silence, Quinn said, "And I suppose, ma'am, you have a church right here on the Island?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Waine. "One of the completest, I have heard, sir, for a country church, in America."

"Indeed, ma'am," said Quinn. "Indeed. You must find it a great comfort to have a church near by at all times." He took out a handkerchief and wiped his brow. "You may be interested, ma'am, in a movement I have the honor to have begun, for bringing sea-faring men closer to the church.

Mrs. Waine declared that she was certain she would be very much interested in such a project.

Quinn swallowed and went on.

"Well, the secret of it lies," said he, "in bringing the church closer to sea-faring men. I have been collecting voluntary contributions to the movement for some time now, as I have sailed about the globe. The idea is based on the theory of beating your spears into ploughshares. I mean instead of fitting out a vessel with powder and guns, I would fit her out with pews and altars—yes, ma'am,—pews and altars and that sort of thing—and put her in charge of a minister of the gospel. A churchship, ma'am—no less. It would be the rector's duty to cruise about on the oceans, holding mass and preaching sermons whenever he should cross the path of an ordinary vessel, full of sin and misery."

Mrs. Waine admitted that she had never thought of the idea before, but that it did sound extremely practical and

would no doubt be a great source of good.

"I should like to give something to the movement," said she.

Quinn put down his teacup and thanked her kindly. Drawing the handkerchief again across his forehead, he went on to say that, with all due modesty to himself, he thought it was an idea that might go far towards Christianizing the seas, provided that he could get the proper sort of people behind it.

When Waine came and they sat down to dinner, Waine asked him in a conversational way if he had ever heard, in his cruises over the world, of this pirate called Captain James, the tall gentlemanly man with the scar on his forehead.

Quinn blanched.

Then, recovering himself, he said in his usual voice that he had read the account in the *Gazette* with some surprise, because he had heard it definitely stated, when he was calling at a port in the East Indies twelve months before, that the man was dead. He had talked with one of the crew, who told him he had seen James shot down with a musket before his own eyes.

The same thing, according to the man, had happened to the first and second mates. James's ship, the *Esperanza,* had been sent to the bottom, and this one of the men had alone escaped by leaping into the sea. He thought, however, though he didn't wish to seem unpatriotic, that it was typical of the government to be searching still for a man a year dead.

"I never heard of him before," said Waine. "He was a notorious robber?"

"Well," said Quinn, glancing at Mrs. Waine, "the sea has bad men and good men, just like the land. I have run into many bad men on the ocean."

"Pirates?" exclaimed Mrs. Waine.

"Yes, ma'am," said Quinn. "I have run into this same Captain James on a night I won't soon forget. But it was years ago, and in another part of the world. . . You have read that he had a scar on his forehead? Well, he had. And I saw him when he got it."

"Really!" said Mrs. Waine. "Was Nicholas with you?"

"Indeed he was, ma'am," said Quinn, without a moment's hestitation. "The most gallant and God-fearing mate that ever took his post on a fo'c's'le!"

"Tell us about it," Mrs. Waine begged him.

Quinn hesitated a few minutes in thought, then told them a story that got him through the evening without being questioned as to how he had come there and other personal matters.

THE BURDEN of the story, which Quinn carried over the better part of an hour, was that, while on a voyage from India to London with a cargo of precious stones, spices, silks, and so forth, he had sighted James's brig, five hundred miles north and west of Cape Horn. On board Quinn's vessel was a young naval officer who had been taken ill on his ship at Bombay and engaged passage with him back to England.

"One Winton, his name was," said Quinn. "One William Winton."

This young officer, as soon as the brig was recognized as James's, weak though he was, demanded that he be given a cutlass and pistols with which to help defend the ship. Quinn had no sooner supplied him than James fired across his bow.

The captain described with great minuteness the maneuvers of James's vessel and his own as they were brought round and into range. The fight lasted the larger part of the night, and was only then brought to a victorious end by the bravery of this young naval officer. He fought James single-handed, and finally dealt him such a blow on the head with his cutlass that James dropped like a log and lay as if dead. His men quickly lifted the body and carried it back to the *Esperanza,* and, their courage having been weakened by what they took to be

the death of their captain, they cast off and fled.

When Quinn had finished, Waine said:

"His name was Winton?"

"As near as I can recall, sir," said Quinn. "Winton or Williams."

"There is a young officer on board this frigate by that name."

"Indeed, sir!" said Quinn. "I understood that the man had afterwards been run over in a London fog and killed. It must be a different chap."

But he thanked Heaven that the candle-light was dim. He went upstairs almost immediately, and sat for a great while, his feet stretched out in front of him, his gaze on the waving canopy of light which the reflector to his candle cast on the wall. From farther away, he heard the clock on the landing chime and strike two, but he made no move other than to glance at the window. Apparently there was a wind rising, for the twigs of the live oak outside of his window had begun to scrape on the glass.

He paid little attention to it at first. In a few minutes he listened to it more attentively. The wind seemed to be coming in short gusts, for the scratching of the twigs was not continuous, but broken intermittently by sudden silences.

He pinched out the candle and stepped to the window. When he raised the sash the night was clear enough for him to see a figure standing on the ground below him. The man was wrapped in a black cape with the collar pulled close under his chin, but the cock of the hat, even if that had been all he could see, would have told him it could be nobody but Nicholas. The man in the tree was undoubtedly Daniel.

Nicholas waved for him to come downstairs.

Quinn threw his coat about his shoulders, for the house was cold, put in his pocket the now badly-worn copy of the *Gazette*, and, tiptoeing down, quietly pulled back the bolts of the front door.

Nicholas led them into his father's library and shut them in.

"A small fire, Daniel," said he. "Our Captain Quinn seems scantily clothed."

"You have been gone a long time," said Quinn.

"It might very easily have been longer," said Nicholas.

Daniel rekindled the fire and stood up in front of the blaze.

"And now, Daniel," said Nicholas, "you might see what you can find in the pantry, for your master is, after all, only human and must eat."

When Daniel was gone Nicholas asked about Quinn's wound. Quinn, without replying, took from his pocket the copy of the *Gazette* and handed it to him. Nicholas held it in the light of the fire and read the account through, as indifferently as if it had been an invitation to dinner.

"They have promoted me beyond my deserts," said he, when he had finished. "And my esteemed family," said he, after a while, "they don't understand?"

"No," said Quinn. "We are safe so far. But the frigate is coming back and I will tell you more. Do you remember a naval officer named Winton?"

"My head begins to ache at his name," said Nicholas. "Something tells me that when my gallant skull is found two centuries from now they will see his name carved on the forehead of it."

"He is on the frigate."

"I really guessed that when you named him," said Nicholas.

Daniel returned with a tray of food. Nicholas ate slowly, but he seemed to be curbing a desire to devour all the food at once. As he ate he questioned Quinn about everything that had happened to him during his absence; when he had finished, he tossed his napkin on his plate and stood up with his back to the fire.

"Daniel, a new log on the fire—a large log that will last until the end of our story, a long one," he said.

TO BE CONCLUDED

PECOS BILL'S WEDDING

BY TEX O'REILLY

THIS legend about the strong, silent men of the desert is a lot of tenderfoot imagination. They are strong enough, too strong most of them, but emphatically not silent. A desert rat who has been hermiting in the brush for months gets so loaded with half digested ideas, opinions and general propaganda, that he simply has to work his vocal cords when he gets an audience.

That was the trouble with our guide, old Veracity Updike. He was filled to the hat band with ill-concealed conversation. Four of us, Tompkins and I and young Jody, the horse wrangler, had been held prisoners since the day before by a dust storm in a deserted adobe shack. There was no escaping the monologue. Old Veracity was a dangerous man to interupt when he was in a spasm of his verbal mania. He had a habit of enforcing attention with a six-shooter, and had once shot a nester who doubted his yarns.

When we crawled out of our blankets the second day of the storm, the wind was still blowing and old Veracity was still talking. That is he started his verbal breeze as soon as we opened our eyes.

"Breakfast ready and no chance to hit the road this morning," he announced cheerfully, as if pleased at the prospect of holding his audience. "Too bad there ain't some way of usin' all this wind to run machines with. Bet Pecos Bill would have figured a scheme if there had been machines in his day."

Tompkins and I glanced at each other in helpless resignation. It was dangerous to interrupt our garrulous old guide when he was chanting the praises of his hero, Pecos Bill, the mighty legendary cowboy who performed Homeric deeds in the days when the West was really wild.

"Yes, sir, Pecos Bill sure made this country safe for dudes," continued Veracity, talking over his tin cup between gulps of hot coffee. "Of course, after he moved the scenery out of Kansas and built Pike's Peak, he had some help from his wife."

"Oh, he was married, was he?" I inquired. "You didn't mention Mrs. Pecos Bill last night."

"Course he was married," snorted old Veracity. "He was the most marryin' man you ever saw. That was his strongest weakness. Married probably a hundred women off and on, not countin' squaws,

but the one he loved the most and longest was the one he got in New Mexico. Catastrophe Carrie was her name."

"Catastrophe Carrie?" queried Tompkins. "What an odd name for a wife."

"Not when you consider her raisin' and record," retorted the old guide. So we settled back to listen as he went into details:

CATASTROPHE CARRIE got her name back in east Texas, because wherever she went catastrophe surely followed. In her way she was as much of a hell raiser as old Bill, of course in a more gentle, womanly style.

Even as an infant she took to trouble as a pastime; and when she reached the flapper age she had her reputation made. She was a two-gun woman, and no slouch with a bowie knife. Finally the terrorized pioneers of east Texas, which was her native battle ground, held a meeting and voted that she was too much of a tomboy even for that country.

A vigilant committee called upon her and gave her a choice of quittin' the country or goin' to her eternal reward. Saddened at such treatment she belted on her arsenal, forked her old cayuse, and headed west where a real gun-woman could lead her own life without gossip.

What Catastrophe Carrie really wanted was love. It's funny how a lady never really loves a gent that she can lick, and all of Carrie's lovers had been early casualties. Though she had been searching all her life she had never met a man she couldn't whip with her feet hobbled and one hand tied behind her back. That is, she never did until she met Pecos Bill.

So she loped on into the west, her heart jam full of that mating urge the poets rave about, and her soul boilin' over with romance. Then suddenly she ran square into Pecos Bill ridin' his old cayuse over the desert. Carrie gasped with admiration.

"Well, I be damned," Carrie murmured to hide her confusion. "It *looks* like a regular he-man. It *acts* like a man. Maybe it *is* a man. I'll find out."

So Catastrophe steps off her old bronk, picks up a chunk of rock, and busts old Bill right in the brow with it. The rock shattered into a thousand pieces, but Bill didn't seem to notice. He gets off his horse, kinda smilin', walks up and gives her a punch in the jaw. Carrie does a back flip and seventeen somersets and lights in a prickly pear bush. At last her girlish dreams had come true. She had found a real he-man. Fascinated, she moved toward him.

"It is fate. My hero. My cock-eyed hero," she sobbed dreamily, putting one hand on his shoulder, and picking cactus thorns with the other. It was a mighty romantic love scene.

"You are a real she-woman," Pecos said. "How would you like to be my little wife? I'm all out of women at present."

"All right, I don't mind very much," Carrie confessed shyly. "But I'm an old-fashioned girl. I don't believe in these modern compassionate marriages. You'll have to get a regular pre-ordained preacher, and have the knot tied proper in order to avoid the foul breath of scandal."

For a minute Pecos Bill was up a tree, as there weren't no licensed sin-busters west of the Pecos in those days. Trust old Bill to solve a problem. At that time he was a war chief of the Kick-a-Poo Indians; so he used the Medicine Man of the tribe to tie the knot.

Social circles in the west never did see a weddin' like the nuptials of Pecos Bill and Catastrophe Carrie. Bill killed a herd of buffalo and barbecued them; then he dug a forty-acre pond and filled it full of mescal and called in all the Indians to celebrate.

The bride wore an evenin' gown of

tanned panther skins decorated with scalps, her veil was woven out of humming bird hides, and her moccasins were made out of Gila monster pelts. The only jewelry she had was a necklace of human teeth, the gift of the groom. The groom, himself, was garbed in the conventional buckskin, with a war bonnet of several thousand eagle feathers, showing how many enemies he had slain in battle.

You never saw such a sight as when the Medicine Man, in the name of the great Manitou, declared them man and wife. Ten thousand Kick-a-Poo Indians leaping up and down making war whoopee, an orchestra of a thousand musicians pounding on their tom-toms, thousands of squaws squawling, and thunder and lightning making an uproar in the mountings. It was indeed a solemn occasion.

That night the guests made merry, dancing, eating buffalo hump, and drinking buckets of mescal. At one time in the festivities four thousand five hundred fights were going on at the same time, while the blushing bride was receiving congratulations. When the merry making was at its height the happy couple stole away to their wickiup, where Pecos Bill had made a love nest for his battling bride.

For a honeymoon Bill and Carrie went on the war path with the Redskins. It was on one of these raids that Bill proved that he was a scientist, and solved a great mystery.

When the Kick-a-Poo Indians would be exploring around looking for a battle or a massacre, the old chiefs would always ride out ahead. Always towards evenin' they would halt, sit around in a circle and pass the pipe. Then the tribe would pitch camp around them.

One evening the chiefs squatted on a dry desert hill top. It puzzled Bill because it was a mighty poor place to camp, and half a mile below in the valley was a stream of water, green grass and a thick grove of trees and brush. When he asked about it the Indians told him that that grove was the home of an evil spirit. They swore that every animal, beast or man that ever went in there, never came out. Even birds flyin' overhead would drop down and disappear.

Bill had an old shade hound he was fond of, and about supper time he heard the hound howlin' down in the mott of trees. Bill started down after his dog. The Indians begged him not to go, swearin' that it was certain death, but certain death never did stump Pecos Bill.

When he got amongst the trees, he found the ground was marshy, and almost dark as the inside of a cow, on account of the trees being so thick. About half-way in Bill began to have a funny feelin'. It seemed as if a rope was tied around him draggin' him into that grove. You know Pecos Bill was a mighty man, the most powerful ever lived, but that strange power just dragged him along as if he was a kid.

By and by he came to the center of the grove. There he found a giant old cotton wood tree that was hollow and split by the lightnin'. The hollow tree was full of yellow powder, and the old hound was flattened up against the trunk, howlin' and moanin'. Bill got that hound by the collar and started out, but it was a terrible battle. Hour after hour he struggled against that mysterious power that seemed pullin' him back. It was like a man tryin' to pull a freight train. Inch by inch he gained until toward morning he escaped from that grove and got back to camp clear played out for the only time in his life.

Some time afterward Bill met one of these scientific sharps who was a doctor. By a lucky foresight Bill had put a handful of that yellow powder in his pocket, so he asked this doctor to analyze it. The doc told him it was mustard.

Bill then investigated and found out the facts in the case. It seems that a long time before a wagon train full of emi-

grants was besieged by Indians in that grove. One of the wagons was loaded with mustard, and the emigrants packed it in the hollow tree because mustard was the scarcest thing there was in the old west. All them pioneers was massacred. That mustard kept oozin' out of the tree into the swampy ground, until finally it had made a huge mustard plaster. That plaster is still workin', drawin' every living thing that comes near it in to its doom. Only a man like Pecos Bill would have solved that mystery.

AFTER some months with them Indians Carrie grew discontented. She argued that the war path was all right for a vacation, but it was no job for a married man. She said she wanted to settle down and have a tepee of her own. It was the eternal woman's instinct croppin' out.

Just to satisfy her whim Pecos Bill agreed to set up house keepin'. It was some house that he built. Leveled off the top of a mountain on the upper Rio Grande, built the walls ten feet thick out of rock he dug out of the Rocky Mountains, and made the rafters out of giant sequoia trees he dragged over from California. Then he staked off New Mexico for a ranch, and stocked it with about a million long horns.

Old Bill used to amuse himself by inventin' funny animals. He put stingers on the bugs and taught the buzzards how to fly. One of his greatest inventions, however, was pure accident.

One day Bill was readin' in a paper how the Frenchmen eat frog legs, and how the dish was growin' popular back East. That set him to figgerin'. One female frog averages two thousand eggs a year. Allowin' for infantile mortality that would mean about fifteen hundred tadpoles a year per female.

With frog legs sellin' in New York at ten cents apiece, it looked like big money. Bill figured that a tadpole crop of five million, a modest figure, even if you kept a million for breedin' purposes, would mean four million frogs. Four million frogs would have eight million legs. You see, they only eat the hind legs. Eight million legs at ten cents apiece would amount to eight hundred thousand dollars, a right tidy sum. Feedin' wouldn't cost anything because frogs feed on bugs and bugs are free and plentiful in New Mexico.

Bill hired a man and sent him over to France with orders to bring back fifty thousand of the best eatin' bull frogs to be had. The man obeyed orders and finally Bill got word that a ship had landed his frogs at Galveston.

Hirin' a big bunch of old time frog boys, Bill started to drive his frogs across the state of Texas. For fear they might get mixed up with the ordinary, no account native frogs he first had to brand them. There ain't many men who could rope and hog tie fifty thousand frogs and put his brand on the left hind hip, but old Bill throve on the impossible.

He did it. It sure was a fearsome sight to see them frog-boys, swingin' their lariats, utterin' their shrill frog-boy yells, forefootin' them frogs with uncanny skill and draggin' them to the fire. As the hot iron branded the skull and crossed shanks, which was Bill's brand, the bellering of them angry frogs swelled into a mighty chorus which could be heard all over Texas and half of Mexico.

Then Bill and his gang started drivin' them frogs westward. You know that drivin' a bunch of steers ain't no cinch, but keepin' frogs in the trail is harder. Every frog hops in a different direction and when you have fifty thousand frogs hoppin' in fifty thousand directions, I'll tell the world you have your hands full. But Bill did it.

More than that, when they got half way across the Staked Plains all them frogs got tender feet from the thorns and the desert sands. Could that stop

Bill? He rounded them up, roped them all again, and shod every dad blamed frog with iron shoes.

Finally he drove the herd up to the home ranch where Catastrophe Carrie was waitin'. Bill herded them into the Rio Grande, but the first day about a thousand of them drowned. They had been so long away from water they forgot how to swim.

Then old Bill sat down under his own vine and fig-tree and waited for them frogs to multiply. Spring came and it was time for the tadpole crop. Bill just sat gloatin' over his profits. Anybody can figure that fifty thousand frogs is twenty-five thousand wedded couples, and twenty-five thousand couples having a thousand marketable frogs at a conservative estimate, means twenty-five million frogs, or fifty million legs at ten cents a leg.

Spring waxed and waned and summer came, and still no tadpoles was ushered into the world. Old Bill was worried. Something was radically wrong. He knew his figures were all right but the hell of it is that frogs can't figure. Catastrophe Carrie was inclined to be skeptical.

One day she strolled down to the Rio Grande and looked the herd over.

"Bill," she said, "you got what you ordered. You sent for fifty thousand bull frogs and that's exactly what you got. There ain't a cow frog in the bunch. Men are so silly."

Sure enough, it was true, and Bill realized that his prospects for twenty-five million tadpoles was mighty slim. Did he accept defeat? Not Pecos Bill. He rounded up fifty thousand lady lizards, paired them off, cross-bred and produced the horned toad, which still flourishes in the land.

One of Bill's experiments turned out awful bad and the folks out West never forgave him. He took the meek and lowly burro, the most stubborn, conceited animal alive, who brays around night and day at the top of his voice without ever sayin' anything, and crossed it with the trade rat. A trade rat's chief occupation is borrowing everything he takes a fancy to, and never giving it back.

Bill sure made a mistake when he crossed them two animals, because the offspring turned out to be the flivver tourist who swarms along our highways, inheriting all the bad qualities of both ancestors. Today the flivver tourist clutters up the country, always borrowing a quart of gasoline to take him to the next town, and braying night and day about everything he don't know nothing about.

OLD VERACITY UPDIKE had talked himself hoarse, scarcely pausing to shift his chewing tobacco from side to side and draw breath, so eager was he to impress his audience with the virtues of his hero. He was interrupted by a gentle snore from my partner Tompkins. Veracity glared in anger at the dozing Tompkins.

"Pecos Bill certainly led a full life," I said. "It's a wonder he never dabbled in politics."

"Dabble in politics," snorted our old guide. "Bill invented politics. If that poor-mannered friend of yours intends to put in his whole life sleepin' we might as well all take a nap. Jody, feed the horses."

I hastened to volunteer to assist young Jody. When we were safely outdoors Jody nervously whispered:

"Best just let him talk himself out. It's lucky all them words didn't fester inside of him. It's the dust storm set him off."

After the verbal typhoon in the cabin, the howling storm seemed soothing to our ears. We waited to give Veracity time to fall into slumber. When we cautiously crept to our blankets we found, to our despair, that the cabin still rumbled with conversation. Old Veracity was talking in his sleep.

MURDER MILL

By ROBERT E. PINKERTON

STAR was barefooted. He was miles behind the dust cloud of a herd of horses that were being driven westward.

"Act like an old mare that nobody cares about," Just Another Jones said as the pressure of a knee turned Star to the right. "Or maybe you're lame and the wranglers saw you couldn't keep up. Try limpin' a bit."

A twitch of the reins, and Star limped dutifully. He hobbled to some bunch grass Jones had already spotted, cropped for a moment and then went on still limping.

"Grand!" Jones chuckled. "Nobody could find where we joined that herd's trail, and nobody'll suspicion but what you're a mess o' wolf-bait droppin' out of it. Maybe nobody's trackin' us, but it's always best to play safe. Now we can go where we want."

His speech was slow but his eyes had been noting several things, and he promptly urged Star through a rocky defile and then set him at a lope to the west, behind a ridge.

"About half a dozen men are aimin' to cut the herd's trail along here," Just Jones said after he had ridden a mile. "That was their dust to the south. And they ought to see, same as we did, that those hosses was bein' run out of the country. Wonder what *their* idea of it will be."

He dismounted, removed Star's bridle and lashed it to the saddle, drew a .30-30 from its scabbard and started up the ridge.

"Won't be gone long," he said, "so you stick close."

The crest of the ridge was bare of trees and brush but an outcropping of rock afforded secure hiding places. Just Jones crawled on his hands and knees to one of these and, after removing his hat, took a peek through a crevice.

Out on the plain, a small dust cloud was approaching. He had been watching it before turning back of the ridge. Now he saw that it was moving more swiftly. Seven riders loped abreast.

When half a mile away, they swerved and came straight toward Jones' hiding place. Again their speed increased.

"What's that for?" Jones muttered. "They was headed for a draw. They can't climb this."

He glanced to the left to find two men jogging along the foot of the ridge. Jones estimated that the ambling trot of their horses, and the fast gallop of the others, would bring the two parties together at the bottom of the steep incline directly beneath him.

"And twice I've seen the sun flashin' from what must be a sheriff's badge," he muttered. "That means a posse. Wonder if they're interested in this bunch o' stolen hosses."

But the sheriff's men rode across the broad and unmistakable trail of the horse herd without glance or pause and came thundering up to the foot of the incline. They pulled their mounts to a plowing stop in front of the other two.

This pair, Jones could see, were young cowpunchers most evidently going about their business. They had emerged from the hills just beyond and had not yet seen the trail of the horse herd. Nor were they in the least disturbed by the posse. They sat their horses easily and began to roll cigarettes as a rider with a star on his vest spurred up to them.

Not all the words came clearly to Jones. One cowpuncher waved an arm toward the hills. Both shook their heads.

"I deputize you!" Jones heard the sheriff shout as he pointed down the ridge. "Get going! Cut 'em off if they try for the pass."

The posse had spread out, leaving a clear space. Two deputies had dismounted and were examining their horses' feet.

At the sheriff's command, the cowboys dug in their spurs and darted through the opening. Jones watched them, puzzled. It was only out of the corner of an eye that he caught the swift movement of the men on the ground.

Each dropped his mount's foot and jerked a rifle from the saddle. The weapons snapped up and cracked as if the men were drilling. The two cowboys tumbled from their horses and, after rolling over once or twice, lay motionless.

Many times Just Jones had seen death come swiftly and with appalling violence, but never had he seen anything so brutal, or so inexplicable, as this.

He had not seen it all. The sheriff, a big man wearing a checkered shirt and white hat, scarcely glanced toward the two murdered cowpokes. The murderers themselves pumped out the exploded shells, casually examined their weapons and slipped them back into the scabbards.

The sheriff rolled and lighted a cigarette, looked across the plain and along the ridge. He slid to the ground and sat on a rock. Some of the others dismounted. All smoked. They talked but little, and in short sentences. Once a man laughed. No one seemed to take an interest in anything.

Just Jones' gray eyes, usually laughing, were afire. Never had his trigger finger itched so maddeningly. The men below him were wholly off guard. He had eleven quick shots, and protection. He might get them all, if he fired accurately.

The chance was lost as he worked into a better position. Suddenly the sheriff flicked away his cigarette and mounted.

Instantly the others were in motion. They rode to the bodies of the slain pair, circled them, were gone in a cloud of dust.

Jones saw them catch the two riderless horses and lope away into the west, on the trail of the stolen herd.

"That," Jones spoke aloud, "was something a whole dictionary couldn't give you an idea of."

As he stood up, he saw one of the two men lift his head. Jones vaulted the outcropping and slid recklessly down the steep slope, digging in his heels and keeping his feet by a miracle. He hit the flat with immense strides and was soon at the wounded man's side.

"Hit bad, brother?" he asked gently as he turned the cowpuncher over.

A great pool of blood lay beneath the man. His face was deathly white, his eyes closed.

"What happened?" came in a puzzled whisper.

"Tell me!" Jones rasped.

"Sheriff—train robbers—deputized us —watch a pass."

The effort was too great. Blood gushed from his mouth, and he died.

Awe and anger mingled in Just Jones' curses. He went to the other man and found he had been killed instantly by a bullet through the heart. Even a grin on the boyish face had not been entirely erased.

Just Jones stared at him a moment. He had seen this boy a year before and two hundred miles east. The incident came back vividly—cow-town loafers in Silver Mesa baiting a drunken and broken old-timer, a clean cut, steady eyed youth stepping between them.

"Try that on me," the youth had said. "Then we can all have some fun."

Jones walked away. He frowned as he saw his footprints crossing those the posse's horses had made, but there was nothing he could do about it. Laboriously he climbed the ridge and went down to where he had left his horse.

"Star," he said as he slipped on the bridle, "maybe it's luck, and maybe it's the way we go at things, but we're on the right track. Let's see where those two lads came from."

RIDING back behind the ridge, Just Jones, as he expected, soon picked up the trail of the two cowpunchers coming from the north. Evidently they had not noticed, or had not been concerned with, Star's barefooted hoofprints, for they had not stopped.

"Which looks like they was just goin' from one place to another and didn't have cause to mind what was happenin'," Jones said. "That mean anything to you, Star?"

He followed the trail into the rolling hills. The horses' tracks, side by side, were plain in the grass. After a mile of gradual climbing, Jones came to a wagon road. His keen eyes saw cigarette stubs and half burned matches and places where three horses had stood and stomped flies. In the road itself, the three horses had recently come down. One had returned.

Jones looked back. Gaps in the hills permitted a glimpse of the ridge from which he had witnessed the double murder, and of the great plain beyond.

"Which might mean something," he whispered to Star as he started on up the road.

Two more miles brought him into a pleasant valley. Ranch house, corrals and hay barn were directly before him, and many cattle grazed along the slopes.

Just Jones rode forward without hesitation, and with careful indifference, but from beneath his hat brim his eyes were searching the entire scene. He saw one brand on a horse, another on a cow. A little beyond a steer bore a third. The ranch house was small. The large corral had not been used recently. Only two horses were in the other. There was no bunkhouse and no one was in

sight. The chimney was smokeless.

With Star at a trot, Jones rode up to the open door of the ranch house, spurs jingling, leather creaking. As he stopped, a man appeared. In the instant before Jones spoke, he saw three things. The man in the door was nervous, he was suspicious, and he had been drinking.

"Howdy, friend," Jones said with just a touch of servility in his tone. "I'm riding the grub line, and could you tell me if I'm still on it?"

"Maybe you are and maybe you ain't," was the surly answer. "I'm alone here. No cook."

Jones slid from the saddle.

"Friend!" he exclaimed. "I'm that hungry I'll make a batch o' bread and go out and butcher a steer while it's risin'. You step right in and make yourself to home while I juggle the pots and pans."

The man relaxed, suddenly and completely.

"Aw, we'll both rustle a meal," he grinned. "But first le's have a drink."

A bottle on the table was half empty. The tin foil of the cap lay beside it. No other bottle was in sight. The breakfast dishes were washed. The place was neat. The man was freshly shaved. Clearly, he had not been on a prolonged drunk. And the chair beside the table faced the open door.

Yet the man's hand trembled as he handed Jones a tin cup and the bottle. He sat down in the chair and looked at the trail coming into the valley.

"May you always have good horses under you, clear skies above you and a happy heart between," Just Jones toasted as he raised his cup.

The man started, then grinned in a sickly manner and gulped down his liquor.

"That's a good wish," he muttered. "Le's have another drink."

Most evidently, the man was laboring under a strain. He might break. Two youths had ridden from his door to death scarcely an hour ago.

But he did not break, despite the skill with which Just Jones laid traps beneath the steady flow of his amusing chatter. Jones cooked the meal. He pretended to drink much more than he did, especially after the second bottle appeared. The liquor only formed a bulwark behind which his companion entrenched himself more securely.

He delighted in Jones' jokes, laughing uproariously. Jones detected relief in that laughter, an eagerness to escape into mirth. But that was all. Nothing else came of the winnowing, for with liquor the man grew cunning and secretive. An evil glint showed in his eyes.

"You go see Lute Gale when you get to Ballard if you're lookin' for work," he said as Jones was leaving. "Lute owns this ranch. Tell him Ben Lewis sent you. Lute needs a good man at another place he's got."

Suddenly Ben Lewis was frightened, and half sober.

"Listen!" he exclaimed. "Tell Lute you saw me way out on the Big Flats. Don't let him know you was up here. I'm supposed to be lookin' up some strays. An' let me show you. Don't take the road. Cross the creek here and you'll find a trail leadin' through the hills, straight to Ballard."

Just Jones sang gaily as he rode away, sang until he had disappeared in a draw.

"Star hoss," he said, "I'm glad you didn't see that Ben Lewis like I did. You might get to hatin' me 'cause I walk on two legs. If a man's aimin' to be bad, he ought to be all bad. No half an' half business. That feller's goin' to see ghosts tonight, and they won't come out o' any bottle."

Star jerked his head in a way he had when Just Jones entered into conversation with him.

"Lewis ought to see ghosts," Jones continued harshly. "He was a fine kid, that one from Silver Mesa who got it

through the heart. And Lewis rode beside him, friendly like, and stopped in the draw and smoked and pow-wowed until he saw the posse comin' across the Big Flats. He must 'a' had practice, this Lewis, to time it so the posse would meet up with them two just as if by accident."

Jones rode on, thinking, but with eyes alert.

"Train robbers, the other kid said. Deputized to head 'em off at a pass. And then them two slaughter house *hombres* unlimber their .30-30's. Ain't it hell, Star hoss, what some men will do for a few stinkin' dollars?"

JUST JONES was a stranger in a strange land, and he knew he could not trust any person or anything outside himself, least of all a man so weak as Ben Lewis. He lost no time in leaving the trail and cutting through a draw to the south. In half an hour he was out on the flats and following the tracks of the stolen horse herd and of the sheriff's posse.

It was the next step on the way to the heart of that double murder, Jones knew, and he urged Star on. Even at a gallop, he could read the sign. The hills fell away to the north. Soon he was far out on the plain, and many careful surveys behind and to both sides told him he was alone.

Six miles from where the two youths had been murdered Just Jones came to a split in the trail. He had not expected this, but the touch of a rein swerved Star before the tracks were disturbed. Cautiously now, Jones approached. He saw where the herd had been headed and circled, where the horses, evidently tired, had stood for a while.

And then, when they were started on, a dozen or more had been cut out. These were headed toward the southwest. The main bunch went on, swerving to the north.

Just Jones tipped his hat forward as he scratched the back of his head.

"What you make o' that, Star hoss?" he demanded. "The posse's hosses was all shod, and here's the seven of 'em followin' this jag o' crowbait straight for Ballard. The rest goes on, and in two days they'll be where their owner'll never find 'em again."

He considered a moment, and then an imperceptible signal started his mount toward Ballard.

"The other's only some hosses," Just Jones said. "This way's the answer."

It was hot out there on the great plain, and he did not urge Star when the horse lagged.

"Take your time," Jones said. "I got thinkin' to do."

The sun was sliding into a cleft in distant mountains when he entered a valley. Almost at once he rounded a hill to find a little girl swinging on a gate in front of a house. Green alfalfa spread beyond, and vegetables were strung out in rows. Just Jones swept off his hat and bowed his head to Star's.

"Good evenin', miss," he greeted elaborately. "Is the swingin' good?"

"Nothin's any fun if you do it alone," she answered.

"You ride the critter and I'll spur it," Jones said as he dismounted. "If you get to like me, maybe your daddy'll let me stay the night."

"He likes to have anybody stop," she said with the deep wisdom of childhood. "Gives him a chance to talk. He'll be through milking soon."

"Which I consider a compliment, miss. This is what you'd call a farm instead of a ranch, eh?"

"We always called 'em farms in Iowa."

"The proper word. Think you could do anything with a dollar next time you go to Ballard?"

The child was right about her father. He was not of the West, had not learned the West's lessons in the two years since his arrival. Great distances and loneliness had stored up words, and not wisdom, within him, and the mere sight of

a stranger knocked out the sluice gates. Jones held the little girl on his knee and listened.

As with Ben Lewis, he winnowed out the chaff, but when he bedded down in the hay mow that night he found a richer harvest.

Ballard, the town, and Ballard County were safe places in which to live. Rustlers and stage robbers and the wild bunch in general did not get away with anything when Sheriff Jim Canty was on the job. They tried it often enough, but they were always caught and killed. Canty did not believe in wasting the county's money on trials. If he found men with stolen horses or cattle or stage loot, he settled the matter right there.

"Just this afternoon, Sheriff Jim stopped here to water fifteen horses," the farmer had said. "They'd been stolen on the east side o' the county. But Jim headed 'em across the Big Flats this morning and fought it out. Got two o' the rustlers.

"And Sheriff Jim's losin' money neglectin' his own interests to serve the people," the farmer had stated with real emotion. "Nobody run ag'in' him last election. Wouldn't 'a' got a vote. Jim is pardners with Lute Gale. They run a lot o' cattle up north. Lute's the richest man in Ballard County, but Sheriff Jim says he's satisfied to know that Ballard's a safe place for people to live in."

Just Jones pondered over all this as he rode the few miles into Ballard the next morning. Although he had never seen the town, he seemed to know quite a bit about it, marking down the two stores, half a dozen saloons and one hotel while he rode along the single street. He put his horse up at the stable and as he walked back to the Frontier Hotel, Jim Canty stepped out of the "Waddyard" saloon.

Just Jones would have recognized him without the star. The sheriff wore the same checkered shirt and big white hat, and Jones felt a cold, prickly sensation creeping up his spine. Only with great effort did he control the light in his eyes.

"I'm warnin' you," Jim Canty began abruptly as he planted his big frame across the narrow walk. "Ballard has no grudge against strangers, but it sure treats 'em rough if they don't behave."

Just Jones stared through a long moment.

"I'm thirty-five years old," he drawled with a touch of insolence he could not control. "I've met up with a lot o' sheriffs and town marshals. Never a one yet has had cause to speak to me *after* anything I did, and this is the first time one's tried it *before*."

"No offense, stranger," was the pompous reply. "I'm just droppin' a hint. We aim to live peaceable and safe in Ballard County, and we been doin' it. Ain't a safer place in the state for men whose ropes ain't too long or whose fingers ain't got a funny itch. There's plenty o' work, and there's enough amusement for them that don't think lamps is targets or streets is race tracks."

"Thanks," Jones said coldly.

He waited. He could not escape thinking of that dead youth's eager expression. And yet Sheriff Jim Canty had spoken with a certain pride and sincerity. If there were evil in the man's big, broad face, the flowing mustaches hid it. His eyes seemed to be those of the fanatic rather than of the crook. His words suggested weakness, and yet this did not show in face or bearing.

"You're welcome, stranger," Canty said, and the first false note came in the heartiness of his voice. "I'm Jim Canty, sheriff o' Ballard County."

Just Jones saw the other's right hand begin to rise, and deliberately he turned to face the street.

"Thanks," he said again, and this time without inflection. "My name is Jones."

He walked across the dusty street. The sheriff stared until Jones had entered the Frontier Hotel, "Jeremy Dow, Prop."

JEREMY, a mild, gray little man, admitted without enthusiasm that he had rooms and served meals. Jones dropped a ten dollar gold-piece on the table.

"Let me know when that's been et and slept," he said.

The proprietor did not pick up the coin. Instead, he was apologetic.

"You'll have to register," he explained as he pawed through some old newspapers and found an account book.

"I did that once, in Denver," Jones objected.

"It ain't me," Jeremy said uncomfortably. "I'd never bother with it myself. Didn't even know it was a state law until Jim Canty got elected sheriff."

"What's he got to do with it?"

"Jim fines me if I miss a man. It's tough when the boys bring 'em in feet first and lug 'em up stairs after I'm abed."

A light flickered in Jones' gray eyes. "I don't want to cause trouble," he said, and he sat down and wrote, "Just Another Jones."

"Now put where you come from," said Jeremy, across the table. "I get fined half if it ain't down."

"Your book's nowhere big enough for all that!" Jones exclaimed in shocked protest. Then he added brightly, "But I can put down the fartherest place I've been," and wrote, "Chicago."

Jeremy turned the register around and studied the signature. A faint smile was chased from his face by a look of real concern.

"Mister," he said sadly, "I wouldn't do that. Not to Sheriff Jim."

Just Jones' chair spun across the room as he arose.

"Meanin' what?" he asked in a voice that breathed the chill of the Arctic and carried the hot desert's familiar rattlesnake warning.

Jeremy Dow was only troubled. "Jim's a good sheriff," he said. "May be peculiar, but he sure rides close herd on Ballard County. He calls this his tally system, and he's quite proud of it."

"Meanin' what?" Jones repeated in the same tone.

"Jim never can see a joke, specially a real good one."

"My name's no joke to me," Jones said harshly. "And when your sheriff comes snoopin' around this tally book, he'd better not laugh. Where do I bed down?"

They went up-stairs together. Just Jones insisted on having a room alone, and in the front, explaining that the morning sun bothered him. He told Jeremy to bring two bottles of whisky.

When these arrived, Jones had written a telegram and asked when the stage left for the railroad. He was not disturbed to learn this was the morning of the second day, and gave the sheet of paper, unfolded, to Jeremy with a five-dollar gold-piece.

"Tell the driver to send it and keep the change," Jones said.

He heard his host's steps hesitate on the stairs and knew the wire was being read:

> To Another Jones, El Paso, Texas, Ballard is a fine town with a real double-action sheriff. Regards to Still Another and Enough. Just Another Jones.

"Another is in old Mexico and won't be back for two months yet," Jones grinned. "So that won't worry *him* none."

He locked the door and opened a whisky bottle. He took a long drink and thrust the neck of the bottle into a large knot hole in the wall, letting the contents run down against the outer siding. He pulled the shades nearly down, rumpled the pillow and blankets, then sat in a chair from which he had a view of the street, both across and toward the stables where he had left Star.

Nothing happened for an hour. The sun beat down on blistered buildings. Few trod the narrow sidewalks.

Then a man stepped out of the "Waddyard" saloon directly opposite. From the color of his shirt and the smooth action of his gait, Jones recognized one of the two who had murdered the cowpunchers across the Big Flats the previous day.

"And that 'Waddyard's' where the sheriff came from," Jones muttered.

Later, Jim Canty himself appeared. He looked up and down the street, then strolled away. From the side window, Jones saw him enter a store, emerge, stop to talk to three different men, finally cross.

"I've got him curious," Jones grinned.

In ten minutes the sheriff returned, keeping close to the building line. Jones had only a glimpse of him as he approached the Frontier Hotel. But a moment later he heard voices below. Jones lay down on the bed.

Soon feet sounded on the stairs, then a knock on the door. Jones snored. The knock was repeated, more loudly.

"Gwan away!" Jones called thickly.

"This is the sheriff! Open up!"

Silence. Another snore. Jim Canty beat fiercely with both fists. Just Jones grinned as he heaved himself out of bed.

"Sheriff?" he questioned. "Slip your warrant under the door."

"Open up or I'll smash in!"

Jones turned the key and sank back onto the bed. Jim Canty entered with gun drawn and blinking in the semi-darkness.

"Mister," Jones said with wabbly stiffness, "I'm a peaceful citizen o' this state. I ain't broken one little law. You got no right bustin' in here."

"No right!" the sheriff snarled. "What you mean, signin' that fool name?"

Just Jones ruffled his hair as he sat on the edge of the bed and considered this.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "You mean in that tally book! Mister Sheriff, what if I was a black buck nigger?"

"Eh? What if you was a nigger?"

"Would you blame me for the color o' my hide, or would you blame my old man?"

"What you gettin' at?" Jim Canty demanded, and he slipped the gun back into its holster with a gesture of contempt.

"My name, of course. Like my hide, you know. My dad give it to me. Can't blame me for it. I wasn't ten minutes old when he plastered it on, and I never been able to peel it off."

"By a long chance, your name is Jones," Jim Canty sneered. "The rest of it don't fool me."

"My old man was born in Jones County, Texas," Jones said. "Happened to be passin' through at the time. It wasn't even Jones County then, and his bein' born there didn't name it. But it always riled him. He never did like Jonses anyhow. Said there was too many of 'em in Texas and everywhere else. That's how my brothers and me come to get our names."

"Yeah?" the sheriff scoffed. "And what are they?"

"You read 'em on that telegram," Jones said.

He was on his feet and facing Jim Canty, swaying slightly but with hands on hips.

"Listen, mister," he said coldly. "I like that name o' mine. A damned good man give it to me. How about it?"

Canty met his gaze for only a moment. Jones laughed as the sheriff's eyes wavered.

"Have a drink," he said, and a touch of command was in his voice.

"All right," Canty agreed. "But you got to admit, though—"

"I admit my name is Just Another Jones," the other cut in harshly.

Immediately he was contemplating, in maudlin dismay the fact that one whisky bottle was empty.

"And I had the door locked, too," he muttered with thickened tongue.

JONES fumbled with the cork of the second bottle, finally poured two drinks, held his own high.

"Mr. Sheriff," he toasted in grandiloquent but unsteady manner, "may your badge o' office always remain as pure and untarnished as the noble heart that beats beneath it!"

Canty's dignity was within easy reach.

"Thank you, Mister Jones," he said stiltedly. "My one desire is to make Ballard County a safe place."

He departed soon.

"That clears up quite a bit," Just Jones grinned as he resumed his seat before the windows. "I knew he was yellow. Now I know he's a fool. Wonder what this Lute Gale is like."

He saw Jim Canty return to the "Waddyard."

"Gale must be good," Jones said. "Canty ain't—and one of 'em's got to be."

Noon came. Several men left saloons along the street and entered the Frontier Hotel. Just Jones could hear their feet on the floor below. Fifteen minutes later they trooped out again, scattered.

Jones stumbled down stairs and found Jeremy Dow alone in the dining room. He tossed a ten dollar gold-piece onto the table beside the gray little man.

"Just in case I eat and sleep too much," he said unsteadily as he took a seat opposite. "A fine sheriff you've got in Ballard."

"He sure tames the wild bunch," Mr. Dow admitted. "Been in office less'n two years, and Jim and his posse's notched up twenty-three."

"Good gosh!" Just Jones ejaculated. "That must 'a' cost a few deputies."

"Jim's got some crack shots, punchers he brought down from his and Lute's ranch. Only two of 'em's been killed. And the sheriff's been in every gun fight, too."

"Some man!" Just Jones said admiringly. "Say, Mr. Dow! You want to watch me. I feel like a bender's comin' on, and they're gettin' harder and harder to stop. I got money now, but you keep close tabs. I don't want to cheat you."

He tossed another gold eagle onto the table.

"All this'll keep you three weeks," Jeremy Dow said.

"That's a lifetime!" Jones laughed. "I may be dead tomorrow."

He arose and staggered toward the door, then came back to his chair.

"Supposin'," he said, "I was to go broke. I always want to pay my way. Any chance for a job around here?"

Jeremy Dow stirred his coffee with a fork.

"Lute Gale was tellin' me only yesterday to keep an eye open for a good cowpoke," he said. "Lute runs a lot o' cows. He seems to be needin' men all the time."

"That sounds good. I made a stake a while back. Come here to spend it. But I'll go broke. I allus do."

"Lute'll give you a job," Jeremy said.

Just Jones returned to his room and poured more whisky through the knot hole. The street was empty during the heat of the day, but just before six o'clock a team and buckboard came in from the west and stopped before the hotel. On the seat was a gray, desert-dried man who walked with a decided limp when he stepped down to the sidewalk.

"Hello, Lute," a voice came from the hotel door. "That pardner o' yours is up to his old tricks again."

"Meanin' which?" Lute Gale demanded crustily.

"A bunch o' T Bar hosses was run off. Jim and his boys headed 'em across the Big Flats. Got two out o' four."

"Huh!" Gale snorted. "I allus said Jim would make a fair sheriff."

He limped across the street and entered the "Waddyard."

"I got to have a closer look at that *hombre*," Just Jones muttered.

He went down the stairs and reeled

across the dusty thoroughfare into the saloon. Lute Gale was at the bar, talking with Jim Canty. A half dozen men were playing poker at the rear.

"Mister Bartender, I'm a stranger in a strange land, and I don't like it at all," Jones whispered as he pawed inffectually at the brass rail with his right foot. "Why don't you put tapaderos on the stirrups in this place? Would help a lot. Here's some hard earned dollars. Would I be breakin' any rules if I asked everybody up?"

He laid down a gold piece and peered into the bartender's face.

"You'd break my heart if you didn't," was the impassive reply. "Ten dollars in the till, boys! The place is yours until I've et."

He pocketed the coin, set out bottles and glasses and departed. Lute Gale turned a wizened, crooked face and peered at Jones, who was slopping liquor into a glass. The poker players trooped to the bar.

"How do you do, Mister Jones," Jim Canty said. "I am glad to drink with you again today."

"May be a pleasure to you, but it's an honor to me, Mister Sheriff," Jones replied with a wobbly bow. "And that goes for any citizen o' Ballard!" Wherewith he included all with a gesture that spilled half his glass.

Jim Canty bowed. The others laughed, and Just Jones did not miss a note of mockery. He recognized them as the posse he had seen from the ridge. Two were the murderers of the cowboys.

Lute Gale alone failed to laugh. He watched Jones with shrewd, cold eyes, though he did not neglect to tilt a bottle.

They drank. Jim Canty filled his glass a second time and the others did likewise.

"To Mister Jones," the sheriff proclaimed. "May he live long and prosper."

"Hey!" Jones objected. "What you wish all that onto me for? It ain't the length o' the trail but the flowers that bloom alongside that make travelin' pleasant. And what's money for but to spend? Fill 'em up again, boys!"

They laughed, all except Lute Gale. Just Jones was holding himself upright with a slippery elbow, and his gaze was dull and uncertain. But he was reading faces and studying men.

A glance was sufficient for the posse, a case hardened lot but not distinctive. Jones believed each capable of any brutality, and yet they were the sort, he saw, that required leadership and control.

Lute Gale interested Jones. He was a small man, past sixty, grim, sour, scheming and ruthless. Seldom did his gaze depart from Jones' face, and in his eyes was a faint suspicion.

Just Jones saw this, and stretched his histrionic powers to the utmost. He was part put to it to avoid drinking more than he wished, but his uncertain movements managed to spill much liquor, while his toasts, frequent, elaborate and humorous, covered several failures to fill his glass.

But always he was conscious of the searching eyes of Lute Gale, even after the cattleman and his sheriff-partner withdrew down the bar and whispered together. At last, rather than risk further scrutiny, Jones announced it was time to eat. He bade a flowery farewell and turned toward the door.

"Here!" Lute Gale called. "How long you goin' to stay drunk?"

"Long's my money holds out," Just Jones answered.

"Then what?"

"Job."

"Where?"

"After a long life o' study and research," Jones declaimed, "it is my conviction that any job is nothing more or less'n a piece o' work."

"Huh! I need a man, but I need him quick."

"Mister, you got no chance so long's two red cents are rubbin' inside my clothes," and Jones pulled several pieces of gold from an overall pocket.

He went on, but stopped at the door.

"It's a queer manifestation o' somethin' or other," he said, "but the more liquor I got inside me, the luckier I feel. I ain't proved anything out o' it yet, but I'll probably give the theory a test tonight. Tomorrow I may come crawlin' to you on all four legs, beggin' for a chance to prove I can stick on a hoss."

Just Jones went at once to the hotel and ate supper. He crawled outside of a lot of steak and several cups of coffee, for he expected a hard night.

"My money ain't goin' fast enough," he said to Jeremy Dow. "What do you advise?"

"I'd put it in a bank," the hotel man advised. "Only there's no bank in Ballard."

"You have gathered some wisdom with your graying hairs."

"The gray hairs come from there bein' no bank. What I've got left over, I have to send out by stage to the railroad and then to Martinsville. Twice now the stage's been held up, and I lost my money."

"In the next county, eh?" Jones suggested.

"In this one," Jeremy Dow said.

"But you've got such a good sheriff!"

"Jim Canty's done a lot, all right, but the wild bunch keeps comin' back. Look at them horses yesterday. And I'm expectin' somethin' more to happen soon."

Just Jones drew himself up stiffly and gave an excellent imitation of having been insulted.

"Bein' the only stranger in Ballard," he began.

Nothing seemed ever to disturb Jeremy Dow.

"I wasn't thinkin' of you," he broke in placidly. "It's just past the first o' the month. Most o' the boys have been paid, and they've been to town and spent the usual twel'th of their annual income. Quite a bunch o' cows been sold. All that leaves the Ballard tills full. Nobody's shipped any money for two months, all bein' scared, so now we've got together and hired a guard for the stage. We'll lump our stuff and send it out at once. Maybe day after tomorrow. Maybe Saturday. Maybe a week later. Nobody knows when. We've left that to Lute Gale, 'cause he's got the most."

Just Jones found himself forgetting he was supposed to have consumed more than two quarts of whisky since his arrival.

"Don't tempt me!" he exclaimed. "I hate work, Mister Dow, and you make that stage sound like a Christmas tree."

"I figure it will be more like the Fourth o' July," Jeremy said. "Lute an' the sheriff workin' together, and part o' that money being Jim Canty's own dollars, I don't think the stage road's goin' to be a healthy place for strangers this next week."

JUST ANOTHER JONES wandered down Ballard's sole street to the stable. Star greeted him with a whinny and a thrust of his nose.

"Rest up, feller," Jones advised. "We're goin' to get some ridin' soon. How they treatin' you?"

The stableman had gone to supper. Jones brought an extra measure of oats from the bin and put them in Star's feed box. Then he found his saddle and bridle and went over each inch of leather minutely, bending and flexing the riggings and latigos.

"Maybe that Lute Gale smells something, and maybe he's only a hungry dog," Jones said to Star. "Either way, he's no man to take chances with, and I'd hate to be dumped when things got tough."

Star jerked his head, as was his custom when Jones spoke to him, but he was more interested in the oats.

"I ain't got so far," Jones continued in a low voice. "Some things are plain, and others sort o' clouded. Jeremy Dow may be just simple. The Waddyard's Lute's and the sheriff's hangout. They sure gathered a tough bunch. And sendin' out that money! Now! And Lute wantin' me to go to work so quick!"

He rubbed Star's back with a bunch of hay, loosening the hair where the saddle had rested, giving those little digs and scratches that a horse loves.

"Somebody in this town ought to be the man I'm lookin' for," Just Jones said absently. "Somebody ought to be smellin' the stink."

He left the stable. Dusk had come and lights shone from saloons and hotel. A lone, shadowy horseman rode slowly down the street, slouching in his saddle and with hat brim low. Jones waited until he stopped at the stable door.

"Room for a horse tonight?" the man asked.

"The wrangler's eatin'," Jones answered, "but there's room and hay."

The stranger rolled a cigarette and struck a match. In its flare, Jones saw a brown face, lean and youthful. Inspiration came.

"I get around quite a bit," Jones drawled. "Was in Silver Mesa a year ago. Dropped in to see my old friend Jud Kemp."

The steady puffs on the cigarette did not waver and the man continued to stare down at Jones.

"I saw a young lad I liked," Jones continued, and he told the story of the rowdies baiting a drunk. "Didn't hear his name, but he sure was the sort a man cottons to."

A long pause, in which the cigarette glowed three times.

"Ever see him again?" came in a casual voice.

"Yesterday," Jones answered. "I saw him murdered."

Slowly the stranger climbed down from his horse, and with an explosive movement he thrust a gun into Jones' stomach.

"What you gettin' at?" he demanded savagely.

"Put that thing back where it belongs," Jones said. "It's tough, boy, but we got no time to waste. I only hope you don't look *too* much like your brother."

Slowly the weapon went back into its holster.

"Here comes the wrangler," Jones whispered. "Give him your horse. I'll be waitin' by that clump o' brush."

Darkness had come when Dal Harmon stopped at the designated place. Just Jones led him back to an open spot where they could not be overheard and talked steadily for several minutes.

"I've known Jud Kemp to speak of you," Dal Harmon said at the end. "I figure I've had luck."

"We'll need it, son," Jones said grimly. "Think anybody'll recognize you?"

"Never figured I look much like Ted. I only hope my mother dies before she hears about this. That's why I came huntin' Ted. She wanted to see him once more."

He turned away at once. A little later, Just Jones followed and stopped in the first saloon.

His gait was weaving again and he ordered up the dozen men in the place. When he toasted the fair name of Ballard, there was little response.

"I've lost two hundred cows and fifty horses," a tall man stated bluntly. "And all since Ballard County got 'safe.'"

"Always was the trouble with Jim Canty," another said. "Jim never finishes a job. He keeps pickin' off rustlers, but he don't discourage 'em none."

"Yeah, and he almost never gets all the loot," an old-timer added. "Look at the T Bar yesterday. Fifteen pieces o' crowbait out o' forty-five run off. Canty only takes nibbles at things."

Just Jones ordered another round and

hung drowsily over the bar. The men soon disregarded him and began talking among themselves. They were a different crowd than in the "Waddyard," seemed to be cattlemen and punchers, a sober, hard working lot. Jones dozed, and listened. After a half hour he wandered away, and no one missed him.

He returned to the "Waddyard." Lute Gale was still there, and the sheriff and his posse. Jones bought a round, and apparently went to sleep at the bar with his head on his arms.

Dal Harmon entered, and stood in the doorway sizing up the crowd. He was a good-looking young chap in the lamp light, tall and well built and with the easy poise and gait of a horseman. After a moment he walked to the bar.

"Have you seen a man named Just Jones?" he asked in a low voice.

"I'll be chargin' him room rent soon," the bartender said with a jerk of his head.

Dal shook Jones, lifted him erect.

"You damned o' crow-bait tamer!" he shouted. "If I hadn't seen your name in that tally book you got to sign before they'll let you eat, I'd never 'a' knowed you was here."

Jones blinked uncertainly, suddenly became wide awake.

"Dal Hawkins!" he exclaimed joyously. "If I'd had my choice of any man livin', you're the one I'd rather see tonight. Have a drink! Now I can get up some speed. This bender's been dying on me just for want o' somebody that understands my nature."

Jones ordered everyone to the bar. He introduced Dal Harmon, as Hawkins, to the sheriff, to Lute Gale and the posse.

"You're plumb surrounded by law, Dal!" he laughed. "These are the boys that make Ballard County the safety spot o' the West, but they don't bother a good time none. Gentlemen, this homely son o' all that's wicked is my oldest crony and the best damned puncher that ever climbed into the middle of a horse. Fill 'em up again, everybody!"

Just Jones was riding high. His joy, and the expression thereof, were unlimited. He bought drinks. He extolled Dal's virtues. He slapped the dignified sheriff on the back.

And all the time he was aware of Lute Gale's cold, shrewd gaze, and of swift glances toward Jim Canty. He saw, too, when one of the deputies was not handling his liquor well, that it was Gale, and not the sheriff, who silenced the man with a word.

After half an hour, Gale drew closer.

"This theory o' luck you was talkin' about," he suggested. "The skinful you got now—nobody can beat you."

It did not last long. Just Jones insisted on stud. Dal said he was broke and refused a stake from Jones. Lute Gale played, and a white fingered man drifted in after the game had started. Jones dozed several times when he had good cards. Dal Harmon talked to the bartender and showed signs of becoming maudlin. The gold pieces fled from Jones' pocket.

AFTER dinner the next noon, Just Jones and Dal Harmon rode south from Ballard. Jones carried a letter, sealed, to Ben Lewis, who, Lute Gale had said, was his foreman on a ranch near the south county line.

"I steamed it open when I was gettin' shavin' water in the kitchen this mornin'," Jones said. "Stole a new envelope from Jeremy. Thought we ought to know what it said."

Dal did not comment. He was no longer playing a part, no longer the carefree crony of a drunken friend. The young man's face was hard and grim, and a ruthless light eclipsed any shadow of grief.

"It says to send us through the canyon at one o'clock tomorrow," Jones continued, "and to watch for a white signal.

It'll come handy, knowin' that, specially as the stage leaves early tomorrow morning."

Dal continued to stare straight ahead.

"This Ben Lewis is kept quite busy," Jones went on. "One day he's caretaker north o' the Big Flats, and two days later he's ramrod of an outfit 'most a hundred miles south. You'll have to forget, son, that he's the one who sent Ted on his last ride."

"Which two was the killers?" Dal broke in savagely. "The short one with the scar on his chin?"

"And the one in the blue shirt who was shy a finger on his left hand," Jones answered. "I'd sort o' marked 'em down as my meat, but you've got all the claim on 'em. How you shoot?"

A rusty tin can lay seventy-five feet ahead. Dal made a swift movement, and the can hopped into the air. As it fell, it swerved to one side from a second shot.

"Bill Cody would be jealous if he saw that," Just Jones said admiringly. "It's funny, though, how big a tomato can will get, and how small a man is when he's holdin' guns in both hands."

"I'll hit 'em!" Dal snarled.

They were to stop at a line shack that night. Lute Gale had given directions. Very minute and careful directions, Jones had noted. Food would be there, and the door was not locked. But as the two rode into a valley they saw smoke floating from a chimney.

"I figured this would be the place," Just Jones said. "It's closer to Ballard. Crooks always get lazy. Grab hold o' yourself, son. You're goin' to meet Mr. Ben Lewis, though he's supposed to be at the home ranch."

"I want him, too!" Dal Harmon said harshly.

"Nope! I need him. Don't forget *that!* And keep a bit behind me and get off your horse quick, Dal. I dropped my tobacco in the 'Waddyward' last night. When I was pickin' it up I saw how you look like your brother. It's from below, like when you're on a horse. Lewis might get skitterish, after seein' so many ghosts."

Ben Lewis waited in the doorway as they rode up.

"Still ridin' the grub line, eh?" he said when he recognized Jones.

"Got the job you sent me for," was the answer. "But Gale said you'd be at the ranch."

"I would 'a' been if I'd had time," Lewis growled. "Lute sends me to roddin' this spread on an hour's notice. He ship you two out here?"

"Yeh. This is Dal Hawkins, an old crony I run into at Ballard. Here's a letter Gale sent."

Lewis opened it, and his nervous manner did not escape Just Jones. After two readings, slow and labored, the letter was crumpled into a ball and thrust into the stove.

"If you're eatin', you're cookin'," Lewis said.

He was irritable. Dal was taciturn. Jones busied himself getting supper, and in keeping up a running fire of comment during the evening. The others failed to respond, but that did not disturb Just Jones. He enjoyed himself thoroughly.

In the morning he and Dal prepared to go on south to the ranch.

"There's a sink hole off west a few miles," Ben Lewis said. "Lost some cows there. We'll have a look first."

They rode through the hills, but no cows were mired in the sink hole. Jones, watching always, saw cattle with several brands. Dal Harmon gave no heed that he saw anything. Lewis became more morose.

They returned before noon and again Just Jones cooked the meal. He found a bottle of whisky, unopened, in a box of grub. He said nothing. Lewis had denied having any.

After dinner, Jones hurried the dishes. Lewis dawdled.

"No rush," he said. "Only a short ride."

"What you mean, short?" Dal Harmon demanded.

Dal's voice was near breaking. Jones glanced at him warningly.

"Three, four hours," Jones said easily. "Suits me."

He sat down, smoking cigarettes, until Lewis gave the word to start. Lewis, he saw, was increasingly nervous. They closed the door and rode away toward the south, among the hills. Jones dropped behind and looked at his watch. It was five minutes of one. He saw Ben Lewis glance at his own timepiece.

Just Jones began to sing. He had a good voice, a clear tenor, and he sang joyously. Ben Lewis jerked his head in irritation, but he said nothing.

Jones, for all his carelessness, watched the country before them. He saw a canyon open head and below, a steep walled gorge partly brushed and wooded.

"Ain't that a pretty place!" Just Jones exclaimed blithely.

Ben Lewis, in the lead, halted at the crest of a low pass and rolled a cigarette. Jones caught a fleck of white against green brush at the canyon mouth.

"I been thinkin'," Lewis said nervously. "The trail's plain from here on. You two can find the ranch. I want to look up something over east. I'll be along later."

He had not turned. Star leaped forward, and Jones thrust a gun against Ben Lewis's ribs.

"Keep going!" he commanded harshly.

"Hey, you!" Lewis began.

Jones jabbed the breath out of him.

"They had a steer in the Chicago stockyards that worked your job," Jones burst out with sudden, savage relief. "I always wanted to shoot that critter. You've pointed your last man into a gun barrel."

Lewis broke. Surprise and fear sapped his meager courage. Jones laughed as he kicked the man's horse forward.

The trail dipped into a hollow. At the bottom they could not be seen from the canyon. Jones nodded.

Dal Harmon hurled himself from his horse with swift ferocity and dragged Lewis to the ground. He hit him, once, and jerked his gun from his holster. Jones tossed a rope.

"Listen!" Jones said when the man had been bound. "You ought to been sweepin' out a store and weighin' sugar. It's the daringest thing you got nerve for. This was no game for anybody who thought his liver was a heart."

"Yeah!" Dal said savagely. "And how is it to be worked this time, Lewis? The sheriff goin' to deputize us and then shoot us in the back, or will they pot us from the brush when we ride up that canyon?"

Amazement held the prisoner dumb.

"This feller'll hang, of course," Just Jones drawled. "He's as guilty as the ones that pulled trigger, even if he didn't do anything more'n tell men when and where to ride. And twenty-three of 'em!"

Lewis found voice. "Honest, I don't know!" he protested frantically. "Lute never tells me. I've never seen 'em do it once. I get word from Lute, and that's all."

"It's been enough," Jones said grimly. "We can't waste any more time, Dal. Canty'll smell something."

"You're not goin' to leave me tied here!" Lewis exclaimed in terror. "Nobody'll find me."

"We will," Dal answered. "We're comin' back."

He and Jones rode down a swale that still hid them from the canyon. Each took a second Colt's and belt from his saddle roll and buckled it on.

Both were quiveringly alert. Two against seven, and only the element of surprise to aid them!

They rode out into the open, down a long gentle slope that rolled slightly.

"From here," Dal said casually, "that

canyon looks good for dry-gulchin'. Maybe Lute Gale thought they shouldn't take chances on you."

"Just because I saw 'em work that deputy racket once is no sign they always do," Jones conceded. "But maybe we can make 'em use it now."

Dal Harmon was puzzled. "How?"

"Not go into the canyon."

Dal permitted himself a thin smile. "Then they'll have to come out, eh?"

"Wait until we get closer," Just Jones said.

About half a mile from the canyon mouth, he twitched the reins and Star began to limp. The limp became a hobble. Jones stopped and climbed down.

"Now ain't that tough?" he drawled. "Just when I get me a job, my horse goes lame."

He examined Star's forefeet and shook his head.

"Canty'll be watchin'," he mused. "If we turn back, he'll come for us and try the deputizin' play. That means we got to ride fast to do our duty. So it'll have to be a stone caught in a frog, Star bein' barefooted."

HE STARTED back up the slope, leading his horse. Dal waited as if in indecision, then followed slowly. They had not gone a hundred yards before they heard the distant rumble of hoofs and turned to see six horsemen swooping out of the canyon.

At the first sound, Jones stopped and again examined Star's foot. He pretended to work on it, then circled the horse on the reins and climbed into the saddle.

"Don't limp now," he said. "Guess we're jake."

They rode side by side down the gentle slope, loose in the saddles, apparently careless, and with nerves like fiddle strings, as the posse came thundering toward them.

Just Jones ventured a glance at his companion.

"First time?" he asked gently.

"What difference that make?" was the hot retort.

Jones felt his own nerves singing.

"None, I guess," he answered. "This job o' stage robbin' took one o' their men, I see. Canty's got only five with him."

Dal Harmon did not comment. He was staring grimly at the approaching horsemen.

"Soften up your face, son," Jones advised. "We got to be a couple o' lambs."

The posse, in a line, plowed to a stop. Jim Canty spurred forward to where Just Jones and Dal Harmon sat quietly on their mounts.

"Howdy, sheriff," Jones greeted.

"Who you seen?" Canty demanded. "Which way you come?"

Just Jones found himself marveling that the man could make his excitement seem so real.

"We seen Ben Lewis at the line shack. He just turned back."

"Anybody else? Any sign?"

"Nobody but Ben and cow tracks," Just Jones answered. "What's busted loose?"

"Stage held up! This morning. Just a few miles south o' Ballard. Deputy killed."

Suddenly Jim Canty was the accusing official. He glowered at Jones and dropped a hand to his revolver.

"Where were you two last night?" he bellowed.

Every muscle in Jones' body gathered itself for quick release. But out of the corner of an eye he saw the two riflemen examining their horses' feet.

"You're the only strangers been around Ballard," the sheriff added.

"We stayed at one o' Lute Gale's line shacks with Ben Lewis," Jones answered quietly. "Got there before supper time. Lewis will tell you. This mornin' we went west a few miles with him. You can back track us every step o' the way."

Jim Canty stared uncertainly for a few moments.

"All right," he snapped. "I need more men. You two are deputized. I think the four who held up the stage are headed for the malpais southwest o' here, but they might double back east when their tracks are lost on the rock."

"You mean you want us to hunt 'em?" Just Jones asked in dismay.

"Sure! Get goin'! I left a man back on this trail a few miles. This gang o' stage robbers will hit a pass he's watchin' if they turn southeast."

"May be he'll think we're the gang," Jones objected.

"Get goin'!" Jim Canty roared. "Hold your arms high as you ride up and he'll know."

Suddenly the sheriff's eyes discovered the two guns hanging low on Just Jones' thighs. They widened, and betrayed a touch of indecision. Jones saw, and dug in his spurs.

"Come on, Dal!" he shouted.

They were away together. The two killers were still intent on their horses' feet. Others of the posse had moved to either side, leaving an opening. They lazed in their saddles, smoking or rolling cigarettes.

Jones noted all this, and their calm indifference, with a snort of contempt that was drowned by the thunder of Star's hoofs. Jones even saw Jim Canty turn a coward's back on the scene.

Star and Dal's horse darted through the opening.

But they wheeled! On a dime! Away from each other!

The killers had dropped their horses feet and were reaching for their rifles when four guns trained upon them.

"They're locoed lobos!" Just Jones shouted.

Dal Harmon's .45's drowned the words. One killer sagged slowly, crumpled. The other ducked and jerked his rifle from the scabbard. A bullet smashed both his right hand and the .30-30's stock.

Just Jones could not escape a grin when he saw the stupefaction in the faces of the other three deputies. It was not panic or fear. It was utter disbelief. Half rolled cigarettes spilled tobacco flakes on overalls. Unnerved hands moved slowly to weapons.

Just Jones' own guns barked. One man fell from his horse, turning slowly and striking on his head. He sprawled and lay still. Another slipped down behind his steed and began shooting between cantle and horn. Jones cut the feet from beneath him.

Dal Harmon was implacable. When the fifth deputy raked his mount and whirled away down the slope, Dal shot him in the back.

Jim Canty, astounded by the fusillade, had wheeled his big roan. Dal threw down on the sheriff.

"No!" Just Jones roared as he spurred Star forward. "I said to save him!"

He struck up Dal's maddened gun. The sheriff dashed away.

Jones was on the ground the next instant, dragging out his .30-30.

"I hate to shoot a hoss!" he muttered savagely, and pressed the trigger.

The roan crashed. Jim Canty's big body arched, and rolled as it struck.

"Go hold him!" Jones commanded. "And keep him for *me!*"

A new shell was in his rifle barrel and he stood ready to cover the wounded. One, with a shattered leg, lifted his Colt's when Dal dashed past.

Jones frowned as he pulled trigger on an injured man lying prostrate, but there was no time for fancy snaps at hands or weapons.

The killer with the smashed fingers sat on the ground, cursing and trying to stop the flow of blood. Just Jones jerked out the fellow's revolvers and hurled them far away.

Jim Canty lay still. His guns, too, were taken from him. Dal Harmon kicked the sheriff until he arose.

"Son, that seems like quite a good

job o' varmint extermination," Just Jones said. "But we ain't half through yet. These are only a lot o' culls. The nice fat beef critter I'm lookin' for is in Ballard."

THEY left the bodies of four men where a tardy death had found them. The wounded outlaw's hand was bound, the horses of the slain were caught and unsaddled and a fresh mount selected for Jim Canty.

"There might be somethin' interestin' in that roan's saddle bags," Just Jones said. "Watch these lobos."

He grinned as he opened the leather sacks. After a swift examination, he rebuckled the straps and transferred the bags to his own saddle.

"I'm keepin' these for the safety o' Ballard county," he said to the sheriff.

Canty did not speak. The man was completely demoralized. Just Jones looked at him and laughed.

"Gutless and witless," he chuckled. "I had you licked the first time you stopped me in Ballard, only you didn't have sense enough to know it."

The four went up the slope to the swale where Ben Lewis had been left. Ben looked up in terror when he saw the sheriff's hands bound to the saddle horn.

"Men walk on two legs, dogs on four, and a louse on two more'n that," Just Jones said as he cut Ben's bonds. "Get up onto your six."

Lewis's mount was caught and his hands were tied to the horn. When the calvalcade started away, Jones held Dal Harmon behind.

Dal's face was drawn, but it was no longer a grim portait of vengeance. Something had swept through and from him in those brief moments.

"Son," Just Jones whispered, "you've had your turn. The play's mine from now on. If you see one of these hombres is sure to get away, down him. But don't go to doin' somethin' just to amuse yourself. Understand?"

The last word was harsh. Dal turned in the saddle to face Jones.

"Yes," he said simply. "I'd never 'a' got started on this without you. I'm obliged."

"Forget it, son. Ride drag on the other two for a ways. I want to stick a pin in Lewis and watch him wiggle."

Just Jones rode in silence for half an hour. Even when he began to speak, his talk was casual. Ben glanced at him suspiciously, then with interest, at last with growing confidence. After a while, Ben himself began to talk.

Dusk had fallen before the lights of Ballard appeared in the valley. Just Jones drew Dal aside and whispered instructions. Then he and Lewis rode down to the town. Ben's hands were released as they entered the street.

"I can hit the eye of a bumble bee and never spoil his carcass," Jones whispered as they passed the Frontier Hotel.

He stopped before the last saloon. Lewis dismounted and went to the door. Just Jones waited, a gun trained on the figure silhouetted against the light. Soon Lewis returned with the tall cattleman who had lost two hundred steers and fifty horses since Jim Canty's election.

"Mr. Turner," Jones said, "I've come to Ballard to get your cows back for you. Believe that?"

Jeff Turner studied Jones in the dim glow from the saloon windows.

"I'll believe anything if I get 'em back," he conceded.

"Grand! Then take Lewis inside and buy him a drink. He needs several. But don't let him wander away from you. And here!"

Jones drew an envelope from inside his shirt. It was heavily sealed with wax.

"Hold on to this closer'n you do to Lewis," Just Jones said. "It's the answer to a cattleman's prayer. A bit later, if you hear shootin,' you might drift over to the 'Waddyard.' And bring Lewis

with you. Between a couple o' your friends."

A knee turned Star into the darkness. Away from the saloon lights, Jones slipped from the saddle. He rounded an empty building and in a moment was behind the "Waddyard." Both guns were in his hands when he kicked open the rear door.

Lute Gale stood at the bar with three other men. One was a deputy sheriff. All whirled. The deputy dropped a glass as he reached for his Colt's. Just Jones shot him through the heart.

"Line up!" he commanded. "You, too!"

A muzzle covered the bartender. "Lift 'em high and walk around this way."

Lute Gale was without cartridge belt or holster, but a .45 swept up with his right hand. A heavy bullet struck the cylinder, and Lute stared at numbed fingers.

"All you graybacks!" Just Jones snarled. "Line up!"

They obeyed. Feet sounded on the sidewalk. Cautious faces appeared at windows and door.

"Come in, gentlemen!" Jones called.

Jeff Turner, the tall cattleman, was the first. Not far behind him was Ben Lewis, between two grim guardians.

"Mr. Turner," Jones said. "Will you take the guns from them two? They held up the stage this mornin'."

Turner started in amazement, but obeyed.

"Now open that letter and read it," Jones continued.

The "Waddyard" had never been so silent as in the next few minutes.

"I'm damned!" Turner exclaimed at last. "This is from the governor. It says he's kicked Jim Canty out as sheriff and appointed Mister—" he paused referred to the document—"Mister Just Another Jones as sheriff o' Ballard County."

Just Jones bowed. "Not for long, I hope," he said. "You got some good men. All you got to do is elect one."

"That's a forgery!" Lute Gale shouted. "This feller is leader o' —"

"Shut up!" Jones commanded. "I want to tell a story."

He told it, each detail of the murder of Ted Harmon and his companion.

"See how they worked it?" Jones asked the astounded citizens of Ballard County. "Lute was always needin' men. He hired 'em, just the minute he had a big job planned, and sent 'em out to one o' his places. Ben Lewis would be there. Ben steered 'em into Jim Canty and his posse. The sheriff's men shot 'em, brought back some of the loot, and reported a victory. But Gale got the the horses or cows or money. The posse was the wild bunch, together with these two *hombres*. Canty got credit for bein' a grand sheriff, and any poor devil of a cowpuncher who wandered into Ballard lookin' for work was killed as a wild 'un. Twenty-three of 'em was ground up in Lute Gale's murder mill. How about it, Lewis?"

The last lashed out at the cowering bellwether of Lute Gale's deadly machine. Lewis jerked, turned and was thrust forward by two strong arms.

"Dish it up, Ben," Just Jones said coldly. "Tell 'em what you told me. I'm still promisin' you go free if you turn state's evidence."

Ben Lewis exposed his true, miserable self, while Lute Gale cursed and threatened and men stared their utter contempt. The crowd began to mutter. Hands dropped to guns.

"Steady!" Just Jones said in a chill, hard voice. "You're too late. I'm sheriff o' Ballard County, and Ballard's a safe place, even for a crook until he's hung. You've got no call to start anything. You've been so damned dumb."

Jones held two guns, and something in the manner of the holding, as well as in his voice, brought quiet.

"You're right," Jeff Turner said. "We've been dumb."

"You men know me!" Lute Gale ex-

ploded venomously. "You takin' a stranger's word for all this?"

"He's right," Just Jones conceded. "Turner, go outside and bring in Jim Canty and a couple others you'll find. And tell Dal Harmon to bring the *ex*-sheriff's saddle bags."

Again silence descended upon the "Waddyard." Turner came back quickly, followed by Jim Canty, Dal and the wounded killer. Dal carried a pair of saddle bags.

"Any of you recognize them?" Just Jones asked.

"I've seen 'em on Canty's saddle many a time," a man announced emphatically, and a chorus of agreement followed.

"Look inside, Turner," Jones commanded.

The cattleman drew out two heavy sacks of gold coin.

"The tags read they're from Lute Gale to the Martinsville bank," he said.

"Sure!" Jones grinned. "Gale gets back his money and the rest of you lose. Canty was to kill Dal and me and take these bags off'n us today. The other two wild 'uns was to escape with your shipment o' cash, and turn *it* over to Gale, too. Gentlemen, who's the drinks on?"

The citizens of Ballard shifted uncomfortably. Jeff Turner grinned.

"On me," he admitted. "Or Lute Gale."

"Let Lute buy," Just Another Jones laughed. "It's his last chance."

GREAT DEER HERD ENDS 5-YEAR TREK

BY ELLISON RAND

THIS winter sees the end of a five-year trek of three thousand reindeer destined to provide game herds for the Eskimos in Northern Canada. They started in December, 1929, from Elephant Point on Kotebue Sound, north of Seward Peninsula, Alaska, and have traveled fifteen thousand miles over mountains and snow-covered plains.

The vast herd was purchased by the Canadian government when the growing scarcity of game in the far north threatened the Eskimos with starvation in the not-far-distant future. No effort was made to hurry the deer on the long journey. The pace was set to suit the fawns, several hundred of which have increased the herd each year. Rest stops also were made at suitable grazing ground and to await the freezing of broad rivers. Last fall the deer settled down for their last prolonged halt at Shingle Point on the Arctic coast near the delta of the Mackenzie river. With the freezing of the Mackenzie this winter they crossed the ice to Kitigazuit Peninsula and were turned loose.

WORLD HORSES

By PALMER HOYT

IT was such an afternoon as to inspire happiness and contentment in the heart of man or beast. Warm April sun flooded the blue grass of the upper pasture. Rolling beyond the immediate confines of the home ranch were the green-brown hills; brown from the searing sun of last summer and shot with green from the snows of winter and the rains of spring. Beyond the hills were the Blue Mountains, a tumbled pause in the flat stretch of eastern Oregon.

"I do wish Big Boy would settle down!" Whistling Annie, a huge draft mare, sighed as she gazed at her ponderous offspring, who was even now engaged in surveying the distant range hills with a jaundiced and misanthropic eye.

"I can see your point of view, my dear," consoled Black Betty, Annie's harness mate and confidant, "but he won't settle down. Like father, like son, you know."

"Yes, his father was a wild one, all right," Whistling Annie admitted and there was a subdued, almost ashamed pride in her manner as she made the statement. "He was and no mistake. Law's sakes, Betty, I'll never forget the time he threw the major through the big glass window in the ranch house. But just look at that Big Boy! Eating

his heart out because he wasn't born a race horse."

The big mare tossed her head in hopeless submission and nibbled a few bites of the succulent grass before resuming:

"And with me telling him all these years that he's got work to do. Law's sakes, Betty, can you imagine that big lout running a race with that spindle-legged brat of High Devotion's? Look, Betty, just look at him!"

Black Betty, a full ax handle and a half wide across her sleek hips, turned her head, shook her forelock out of her eyes, and gazed at the subject of their discussion. She sighed in pure sympathy, for it was obvious even to her limited perceptions that Big Boy was unhappy.

The big, rawboned red colt was gazing on across the pasture fence. His eyes still rested on the immediate beauty of the hills and more distant grandeur of the mountains, but he noted none of the beauties of nature put there so patently for him to enjoy. As the two mares eyed him closely he sighed. Sighed so loudly that it might well have been heard a quarter of a mile distant had there been anyway that far away to hear.

That done, he turned to gaze in sullen interest upon a half dozen long-legged thoroughbreds that stamped and grazed nervously in the adjoining pasture. The colt sighed again, as a colt will when he is dissatisfied with life. He sighed, tossed his head impatiently, bit off a few blades of the blue grass at his feet and sighed yet again and hugely.

Big Boy's envy of the racers across the fence furnished only part of the bitterness with which he now viewed his future. Big Boy was ambitious. There was no longing in his heart at all for the career of draft horse which he knew would shortly open for him. Even the thought that he was to be teamed with Bannock, his boyhood friend and the boon companion of his early days, cheered him no whit. Bannock, now, had made good on the ranch from the start in a big way. At present he was a lead horse on the major's supply wagon that rumbled to La Grande and back each week with supplies for the ranch.

To the casual observer, Big Boy seemed particularly well fitted to the life on which he was about to enter. He stood some sixteen hands and tipped the scales at 1400 pounds in this his fourth year. From his placid, well bred mother, Big Boy got his size and his trim Percheron shoulders and his snug rump. From his father, a fierce stallion of unreckoned heritage, Big Boy got his surprisingly small hoofs, trim legs, a flashing eye and indomitable spirit.

There is no use denying that Big Boy's father had been a bad one. But from Blue Nose, a wise old gelding, Big Boy had found out plenty and in it all he took a full and conscious measure of pride. Among other things Big Boy learned that his male parent had killed an imported stallion, badly mauled the stallion's keeper and had got himself shot for his pains. In this unfortunate incident shrouding his heritage Big Boy gloried. In his eyes his father was fully as great a horse as long-shanked Duke's Ransom, the trotting stud from Kentucky who occasionally favored the young horse with a baleful eye.

In Big Boy's father had run the blood of the wild mustang, flavored with the wild sage, hot with the heat of the high desert and tinged with the freedom of the open places. It was further warmed by the hot blood of some renegade stallion who had left his mares in some quiet California rancho to cross the Sierras and work north to the great desert of eastern Oregon with a band of wild mares at his back.

This was the blood that had come down to Big Boy. Enough of it so that he too sniffed the air from the ranges and wanted to be a kind among horses. While vaguely conscious of his size he

still felt he could run the legs off those spindle-shanks across the fence once they had left the haunts of man behind and come at last to the high country.

And so it was that Big Boy looked across the fence and sighed.

IT WAS not long after this April afternoon until Big Boy obtained new concepts of what this thing called life was all about. He learned to trudge along with three others hitched to a plow which was turning the bleached yellow of the oat stubble to a smelly chocolate brown. Big Boy was not an easy one to break to the harness but man's task was made easier because of Whistling Annie's counsel. She had told him repeatedly that he would get along much better if he did not attempt to break out of the sturdy straps with which they fastened him.

In the matter of work Big Boy somewhat heeded his mother's good advice. But, in the matter of dreams, he did not. He dreamed on. He knew that sometime greatness would come to him. He envisioned himself racing over the rolling hills, far ahead of the race horses with their silly, spindle legs, legs that he could break in one easy kick. He no longer told anyone of his dreams, however, because whenever he had let another share his mental pictures that one had laughed at him because it did seem that Big Boy was doomed to a life of placid toil on the huge ranch.

But ambition brings things to horses as to men and in the early summer Big Boy got a break. There came from the logging country over near La Grande a horse buyer in search of sturdy ones to pull the big wheels in the woods. Big Boy was one of the first selected and with eleven others he made preparations to leave the confines of the ranch.

At his leaving Big Boy was doubly pleased. His was the spirit of the adventurer and he had always wondered what lay across the mountains. He was also pleased because he would get away from those race horses he so envied and hated. That last night when he was turned out into the pasture he ambled over to the fence. He thought to apprise them of his good fortune and make them in turn envious of him. But they paid no attention to him. As always their eyes over him and beyond him. And so, Big Boy only sniffed and turned back to the consolation of the green blue grass underfoot.

The snub, however, hurt Big Boy's feelings more that he would have cared to admit. Even the thought of the great adventure he was about to embark on and the sympathetic assurances of his mother failed to allay the hurt, for Whistling Annie, who had observed the incident, comforted her ponderous son as best she might. Once more the old mare told Big Boy that the ways of race horses were not his ways, that they were a snobby and uppish clique at best and that he should honor them with no further thought.

The ride on the train next day was indeed an experience for the young horse. At first Big Boy was badly frightened but by the time the stock car had rolled into the yard at La Grande Big Boy was quite pleased with himself, deeming himself a great traveler, and feeling sorry that he was not going on to other mountains and other, more distant ranges. Along with the eleven others the big colt was turned into a run in the stock yards to await the coming of a wrangler from the Grande Ronde Lumber company's camp. As the Q ranch horses milled about in the dust of the stockyards another car rolled up, loaded with horses, preparatory to being switched onto the main line. Big Boy's ears shot forward and he nickered softly in salutation. To his chagrin, however, the horses in the car did not reply to his greeting. They looked on and beyond him in the same manner as had the race horses at the ranch.

Big Boy could not understand. These were not race horses. Why, some of them bore saddle marks and showed other signs of toil and for size one or two of them were as large as he. They were not race horses yet they were snooty in the manner of race horses. Big Boy turned to Blue Nose, the wise old gelding.

"What are they so upstage about?" said Big Boy. "They're work horses, aren't they?"

"Work horses?" old Blue nose snorted. "*Work horses?* Say, young fellow, those boys are *world horses!*"

"World horses?" Big Boy asked dumbly. "I do not understand. What are world horses?"

"They are champion buckers. World champion buckers," Blue Nose explained patiently. "They're on their way to Pendleton from the range to get in shape for the Round-Up next month. See that big sorrel with the black mane and tail? That's old No Name, champion bucking horse of all time. That thin flanked horse with the devil's eyes is Blue Vitriol. They say he's killed a couple of men." Blue Nose's tone grew admiring. "Then there's that trim bay there. That one with a slight sway back and a long tail. That's Sam Jackson. And what a reputation that old hellion's got. You see, son, they call them world horses because they only use them in the world champion contests. They have a lot of other buckers, but these lads you're looking at now are the McCoy."

"World horses, eh?" Big Boy muttered to himself as his eyes feasted on these kings of his kind. The buckers still looked on and beyond him but he no longer cared. He didn't mind being high hatted by these famous champions. In fact he would have been ashamed of them had they paid attention to him. "World horses! I should like to be a world horse some day."

And then came a snorting engine. The stock car with the world horses creaked and groaned its way onto the main line and the mighty of his kind passed out of Big Boy's vision. But, with their passing went all dreams of being a race horse. The spindle-legged ones were forgotten. Here were new idols. Idols a he-horse could worship without secret tinges of shame. Instead of himself, tail flying, besting a band of spindle legs he saw himself in sweet vision hurling riders to the four winds after the manner of Blue Nose had ascribed to old No Name and Sam Jackson.

Big Boy told none of his new ambition. He remained silent, for he feared their scornful laughter. But if Big Boy held his peace his dream burned only the more brightly. It was fired by the wild strain in his heart and fed by the hot blood of long dead ancestors who had fought and died unconquered and unafraid.

AT THE logging camp Big Boy found some passing pleasure in the fact that he was chosen as a leader in one of the mighty teams of four that pulled a set of logging wheels, twelve feet in diameter. However, pride in his work was not enough for the young horse and as he pulled mightily at the traces or munched fragrant hay in the barn at night he tried to picture what it was like at the Pendleton Round-Up and to visualize himself trotting into the arena, a recognized champion, a world horse.

On thoughts such as these Big Boy dozed off to sleep every night. Desires such as these filled his mind in the long days when the creaking wheels stopped under the hot sun. These dreams were ever with him.

Big Boy had been on the wheels for two weeks and August had faded into September when the steel tire came loose on the right wheel. At the time a giant sugar pine butt, five feet through, was hung on the axle. Shorty Bussard, the driver, who herded the four big horses along from his saddle on Tip, a mighty

gray wheeler, cursed when the metal band slipped half off the wooden rim. He got down and surveyed the situation.

"Only one thing to do," he decided between curses. "Got to go into camp, get me a hammer and some steel wedges to fix that there wheel with. She'll go plumb to pieces if I take another turn."

Shorty looked his four charges over appraisingly. It was too hot to walk and he was in no mood to ride the huge lumbering Tip the two miles down to camp and the two miles back again. The driver's eyes fell on Big Boy, the smallest, trimmest and snappiest of the big equine quartet. Thought was action with Shorty Bussard and in a minute or two Bussard had his team unhooked, had tied three of them to the wheels and had the harness off Big Boy.

"You ought to be pretty good, feller," the man decided as he maneuvered the colt around to get the advantage of the hillside in mounting. "Yeah, we should be able to step right down there and step right back."

With Shorty on his back the colt did not quite know what to do next. Being worked in the harness was one thing. But having a man on his back. This seemed to him the final indignity, the final straw. It was as though some unnamed gallant ancestor of Big Boy's had whispered in his ear of the promise of the wild places.

As some mighty progenitor of the young horse might have gathered to hurl a murderous cougar from his back, Big Boy bucked. And it was no half-hearted sunfish. It was a mighty buck. Big Boy's head shot down until his nose almost hit the dirt. He went up and up. He came down, his four legs taught, with a jarring crash.

One jump was enough for Shorty. The little teamster hadn't expected anything like this and as he picked himself up and brushed the dust off the seat of his pants he noisily evinced his proper surprise:

"Cock-Eyed Crimus! A big over-grown elephant like you bucking? No, I must 've imagined it!"

So Shorty, having the due courage of his convictions, piled right back on Big Boy's back. The squat teamster spent little time getting on but he spent less getting off.

"Well," Shorty muttered half aloud as he again brushed the soil from the seat of his pants, "I'm convinced. I don't know where you get it but you've got it. I'm forking your friend, Big Boy. You stay here."

So it was that Shorty rode the other leader into camp for his hammer and wedges and that night he spread the tale of Big Boy's prowess. The tale was given emphasis by the known fact that Shorty himself had once been a top-hand and when he said a horse bucked some degree of belief was taken.

"Tomorrow being Sunday," Bill Smithson decided, "we'll take Big Boy down to the Circle Six. If Curly Oaks can't ride him I'll say he's good."

"We'll take him down," Shorty agreed. "But if Curly Oaks rides him I'll quit handling horses and go to milking cows."

"You better get you a milk bucket then," Bill Smithson said, "because that Curly Oaks is a rider. He'll top him off."

"Not for twenty bucks he won't," Shorty argued.

"Twenty smacks is a bet," Bill agreed.

When Big Boy was led into the breaking corral at the Circle Six the fence was lined with hands from the ranch and loggers from the camp. Bets were laid freely. Most of the men from the timber backed Big Boy; the hands laid theirs on Curly Oaks.

It was apparent from the way Oaks went about the saddling that he was a top-hand. He exercised such care in saddling Big Boy and getting him ready for the ride as to draw sarcastic comment from those atop the lodge-pole fence.

"Ain't takin' that cow serious, are you, Curly?"

"Don't worry, boys," Curly responded. "This horse may be big but let me tell you the bigger they are the harder they come down. I'm taking no chances."

Big Boy had stood still during the saddling. He trembled slightly from time to time. Now he looked around at the audience on the fence as Curly Oaks vaulted lightly into the saddle. Curly settled himself in the saddle carefully, taking up the colt's head in his strong right hand, placing his feet in the stirrups with care. Big Boy did not move. He was not yet conscious of himself as a bucking horse.

"Come on, Big Boy!"

Curly's Stetson swished. His spurs raked Big Boy from withers to flanks and back again. And then Big Boy came to life. He came on.

Curly's arm was strong but not strong enough to hold the red colt's head as it shot down, groundward. Up went Big Boy and his fourteen hundred pounds. Down he came. Three-quarters of a ton of shock. Curly's face set in hard lines. He knew, now, that he must make the ride of his life if he was to stay on.

Up went Big Boy. Down he came. Up and up. Down and down. And with each stiff-legged descent there was a sinew-rending and strain that all but tore Curly's insides loose each time. Curly was game. He fanned the colt and spurred him. Big Boy seemed smaller than he really was—more symmetrical as he flashed up and down. He plunged and crashed and as he sought to fling this clinging burr from his back he squealed.

It was a squeal that would have done credit to some dim ancestor backed against a canyon wall by a pack of slavering lobo wolves. As Big Boy pitched on the hot blood of his desert ancestry outraced the respectable Percheron in his veins. For the moment Big Boy was the very reincarnation of that wild horse ancestor of his who had never known man but who had won uncounted and unheralded victories over mountain lions and lobo wolves.

The ride seemed eternity to Curly Oaks but it was really only a few seconds until the wrangler had lost a stirrup in a crashing, bone-loosening landing. Curly was too good a show rider to pull leather and he gracefully arched from the saddle to land in the dust and dirt of the corral. Big Boy stopped bucking at once and stood silent and still. He was the staid workhorse again.

The wrangler rose, fanned the dust from his horse pants and faced the railbirds. He wiped a hard hand tentatively over his dry lips. His eyes went up in challenge:

"If any of you guys think you can ride this horse—"

None took up the challenge and Curly turned to the boss of the Grande Ronde camp:

"How much?"

"Well, ain't anxious to sell him," Bill Smithson decided, "even if he did just cost me $20. What in hell do you want with him anyways, Curly? Goin' to make a ropin' horse of him or jest a gentle saddler?"

Curly ignored the sarcasm.

"Never mind what I want with him. I'll bounce $250 for this baby. How about it?"

"Sold!" Smithson said. "He's yours, Curly."

BIG BOY and Curly Oaks arrived in the Round-Up city on Wednesday, the day before the opening of the big Pendleton show. Oaks at once sought out George Blake, who had charge of the bucking horses.

"How would you like a real bucking horse for a change?" Curly demanded. "I got him, and if you want to see some cowpokes go to cluttering up the landscape, why, he is what it takes."

"I don't need no plowing stock," Blake

objected as he looked over Big Boy's huge bulk. "I'm looking for buckers."

"Don't kid me, George," Oaks responded with some heat. "This horse ain't as big as Roosevelt Trophy but he'll buck harder. Put him in the Northwest bucking tomorrow and if he don't do his stuff I'll give him to you. If he does I want $500 and he's a bargain at twice that. He threw me all over the landscape and it ain't been so long since I was figured one of the best."

"I'll take him," said Blake. "He's sold —if he does his stuff. Put him over in that corral with the Northwest buckers."

Big Boy was embarrassed when Oaks led him into the corral. He felt Curly was making a mistake and he didn't want these Northwest horses, who were pretty good themselves, to think he was trying to move in on them.

However, he soon lost his timidity in his discovery that in the corral next him were the most famous of all the Round-Up's livestock, the World horses used only in the show championships. Big Boy knew they were world horses because he recognized No Name, Sam Jackson and the others he had seen that day in the stock car at La Grande. They were just across the fence from the red colt and at dusk he nickered his homage and greeting. To his chagrin, however, the World horses ignored him; they looked on beyond to the northeast where the rolling brown hills sloped down to the silver thread of the Umatilla.

Big Boy didn't feet hurt this time. So great was his admiration for the World horses that he wouldn't have had them any other way than haughty and proud as kings should be.

"Those are the boys," he said to a gaunt old gray next him. "Say, brother, how do you get to be a World horse, anyway?"

The big gray seemed greatly amused.

"Young fellow," the gray returned, yawning so prodigously as to almost dislocate his jawbones, "you're not figuring on that are you? Those boys in that corral are the best in the world. Even me—Desolation's my name—I've never been a World Horse. You'll be lucky if you stick with us guys."

It was late the next afternoon as the long shadows began to drop over the area that Big Boy was led out of the corral into the space between the stands. All afternoon he had been watching. Riders had climbed on horses. Some had ridden, some had been thrown but always there was thunderous applause from the people in the crowded stands. Big Boy hadn't imagined there were so many people in the world as he saw in those stands and he was nervous and shaking when they trotted him out. He was nervous but a steadfast purpose was forming in his mind. And as he trotted forth the wraith of that wild horse ancestor of his flashed beside him out through the sunlight.

In the arena the big horse squealed and danced as they saddled him against his custom for some of the magnetic excitement of the occasion had entered his horse soul. He was infuriated by the blindfold they slipped over his eyes and he plunged in unwonted madness. Then, as he was saddled and as a rider examined the rigging a strange harsh sound bellied out around him from the horns of the loud speaker system. The sound eddied into a voice:

"In the center of the arena—Umatilla Slim up on Big Boy!"

A rider was suddenly on the red colt's back; dimly he heard Curly Oaks voice:

"Fifty bucks he don't make a ride."

Then they jerked the blindfold away and for a moment Big Boy stood spraddle-legged and uncertain. His eyes drank in the unaccustomed sight of the crowd. He shivered as a football player might waiting for the opening whistle.

Suddenly Umatilla Slim raked the red colt with dull rodeo spurs and fanned him with his big sombrero.

Big Boy responded.

He leaped into the air with a snort of desperate rage that was heard from one end of the stands to the other. Up he went. And down. Up with unconscious easing of a springing catamount and down with the jarring crash of a falling locomotive. Up again. And down. Umatilla's lithe form swayed in the heavy saddle as Big Boy made his first landing with crashing impact. The colt sensed his rider's lack of balance. He plunged again. This time his heels shot out to give an added twist to his catapaultic descent. Umatilla popped back and forth in the saddle. Big Boy lunged out and up. His jumps covered ground rapidly. The earth shook when his fourteen thousand pounds descended. Of a sudden Umatilla Slim was off. He fell heavily in the dusty tan bark while Big Boy jumped on for a couple of more bucks and stopped just as the pick-up man seized his hackamore strap.

Now that it was all over the colt felt his stage fright again and was glad when they unsaddled him and shoved him back in the corral with the other Northwest horses.

"Pretty good, kid," said the gray known as Desolation. "You tossed that rider high wide and handsome. Not bad. Umatilla used to figure to be a top hand."

That night the red colt found himself treated as one of the boys. He was a bucking horse now and accepted as such. He found an unexpected camaraderie among the Northwest horses. There was nothing upstage about them. They discussed things about rodeos.

"We've got it soft," Desolation admitted, "but the World horses has got it softer. They only have to buck at the Round-Up but we have to go around to other shows. The Round-Up lets us out to other rodeos but they won't take a chance on their World horses. All the time those boys have to put in around here is a month for the tryouts and the show itself—the rest of the time they're out on good range."

Big Boy said no more about his ambition to be a World horse. He was more in awe of the famous buckers in the next corral than before. But secretly he longed to be one of them more than ever.

The next afternoon, Friday, and the next to the last day of the show, the first day's performance was repeated. Big Boy was led from his corral and snubbed to a wrangler's horse for saddling. The blindfold was again slipped over his eyes and again unreasoning anger filled the heart of the red colt.

Came the harsh voice of the announcer:

"In the center of the arena—Red Barker on Big Boy!"

"That Red Barker's a great rider and a tough egg," the wrangler's horse informed Big Boy. "He's in the Northwest championships this year just to pick up some easy money. He figures you Northwest horses are a cinch."

This added to Big Boy's indignation as he stood there trembling. He made no false moves this time. He did not rear or plunge. He felt that he would save all his strength for the rider.

And then Red Barker was up. The blindfold was jerked from the colt's eyes. As before he stood still a moment —legs spraddled, ears back. Barker's heels—spur-fitted—crashed against his sides. Even though the steel points had been dulled they hurt. The spurs cracked again and this time he leaped into the air, a red fury gone amuck. A red fury bent on hurling this man into the dust.

BIG BOY squealed as he plunged and crashed. It was a squeal of pure desperation. The big colt was infuriated, transformed. Gone was the staid workhorse and in his stead an outlaw. It was as though the spirit of that untamed ancestor had entered Big Boy's great hulk. The colt bucked fiercely and

squealed again. The earth shook as the big horse plunged.

Three jumps. Four. Five.

Red Barker was no longer raking Big Boy. His spurs were locked in the cinch. The cowboy was waving his hat but it was more as a tight rope walker using a long-staff to balance himself. The rider had ceased to fan the colt.

Six jumps. Seven. Eight.

The big colt plunged with all his strength and as he came down his heels went up and out in a terrific twisting emphasis of the downward crash. Barker slipped to one side. Again Big Boy plunged. The rider lost his balance, slipped again and reached for the horn but instead of the accustomed biscuit he found only thin and unstable air and then, quickly, hard ground. It was a clean throw.

The pick-up man seized his hackamore strap as he bucked madly on. They trotted him to the west end of the arena, pulled off his saddle and led him into the World horse corral. As the gate swung open Big Boy pulled back until the whites of his eyes showed. Even when one of the hands thumped him soundly on the rump he hesitated. Big Boy knew he had no business in the corral with the World horses. The colt stood in proper awe of the kings of his kind. He had the most wholesome respect for No Name, Sam Jackson and the rest and Big Boy was never the one to intrude on majesty. So he pulled back in stubborn determination. But, it was useless. The wranglers got him in and tied him to the fence. As Big Boy hung his head in shame over what he thought a tragic blunder he recognized No Name at his right and Sam Jackson at his left. Big Boy wanted to apologize to those two for the wranglers' error. He wanted to tell these two great ones that it was a terrible mistake but he wasn't responsible for it. He wanted them to know that he'd be the last guy in the world to set himself up as a World horse. He wanted them to know that he realized he didn't have the class. But words wouldn't come.

"Say, kid—" it was Sam Jackson who broke the silence, Sam Jackson, the swayback sorrel of whose prowess Big Boy had heard so much—"that was a fine job you did tossing that rider today and a very fair job you did yesterday. You looked mighty good in there."

"My boy—" it was the great No Name this time, No Name, king of buckers, whose image had filled long dreams for Big Boy in the pine-scented nights at the logging camp—"my boy, that was Red Barker you tossed out there this afternoon. Good rider, too, Red is. I throwed him myself one time a couple of years since but I doubt that I did as good a job of it as you did. You sure made a World horse out of yourself this afternoon. You sure did!"

Under the pretense of routing a deer-fly Big Boy bit himself sharply on the knee to be sure he was really awake. Then, slowly, realization came to the red colt. This was dream's end. He was a World horse. He could scarcely believe it. But these great ones had told him and he knew it was so. Slowly Big Boy lifted his head, for now, again, the spirit of that wild ancestor of his was strong upon him.

Big Boy looked out through the corral fence at the race horse barn where where the horses used in the daily races were housed by the Round-Up. In the exercising paddock he could see a couple of slender spingle-legs being walked around. With a start he recognized them. Both were from the Q ranch. He could see that they had recognized him and were looking at him with surprise and wonderment in their eyes. But Big Boy's eyes did not meet theirs in greeting. He looked on beyond them to the sun-burned Umatilla hills cooling a little in the long shadows of evening.

And then he turned happily to talk things over with his pals, the World horses.

BY
JOHN
MURRAY
REYNOLDS

DEATH ALONG THE BORDER

STEPHEN SAWYER plodded along between the trees. Behind him, with rifle muzzle always covering his back, stalked a gaunt figure in tattered buckskin—Long John Randall of Morgan's Rifles.

The two men moved ghost-like through the misty forest, their feet making no sound on the moss. A common danger held them both silent, for this was County Tryon on the bloody frontier of New York Province, and the year was 1780.

Sawyer was young and stocky, wearing the tattered brown and red uniform of the Tryon County Militia. He looked almost chunky beside the gaunt rifleman who towered six feet three in his worn and stained buckskins, and was as lean as a hungry wolf. His leathery face was lined as the skin of a dried apple.

The woods thinned out along the borders of a creek, and both men halted motionless. After a long interval Long John Randall relaxed.

"Reckon we can cross safely."

"Safe or not, it's little difference to me," Sawyer muttered glumly. The lean rifleman looked at him with a sudden sardonic grin crinkling his leathery face.

"Well, younker, ye *would* desert in time of war. Why did ye do it?"

"That popinjay leftenant, Nate Robinson, was always making trouble for me and—"

"Aye, I know the tale," Randall interrupted, "It's an old yarn, told by every raw recruit who isn't used to discipline. You're a fool. Well—I hope it'll be a lesson to ye when the firing squad loads its muskets."

Randall chuckled at his own grim jest, then prodded his captive down toward the stream. Just across the creek they came to a narrow road, deeply rutted by the wheels of freighter's wagons. An instant later they heard a staccato sound. Randall cocked his rifle and loosened his war hatchet in its sheath.

"Some one coming," he muttered, "Coming fast!"

Down the breeze there now came the sound of a galloping horse. The swift thud of those wild hoofbeats held an intangible note of alarm.

A moment later the lone rider came into sight. He was a raw boned militiaman in a tattered uniform, sitting astride a big roan. Both horse and man were heavily spattered with mud. The despatch bearer's cocked hat was crammed well down on his head, while a broadsword clanked and rattled against his stirrup iron.

Randall dropped the butt of his rifle to the ground and cupped his hands.

"Ho, Express! What news?" he shouted. The mud splashed horseman half turned in the saddle as he passed.

"Turn out! Butler's in the valley with a thousand men!" he shouted, and went by in a welter of dust and flying pebbles.

The two men went forward at a steady trot, powder horns and bullet pouches thumping against their ribs. They breasted a rise, then broke through a screen of bushes to look down on a village.

HOGAN'S BUSH was a scattered settlement of some twenty cabins. Perhaps a dozen were strung out along the trail, the rest were hidden among the trees of the sugar bush that gave the village its name. It seemed to drowse in the early morning sun, but as the newcomers ran past the first cabin a farmer came out and fired his musket in the air. Then a conch horn began to blow a steady alarm.

A moment later they passed the body of a settler in homespun, sprawled on his back beside a rail fence. There was a fresh, still bleeding bullet wound between his eyes. He had been scalped, and the skin of his face was horribly loose from the sag of the severed muscles.

"Give me my rifle!" Sawyer said.

"Give ye *what?*" Randall gaped at him.

"My rifle!"

"And will ye give it back?"

"I will."

For a long instant the two men stood motionless. Long John Randall's hard eyes were narrowed and penetrating. Then the gaunt rifleman laughed.

"Damn me for a zany, younker, but I believe ye. Take your rifle and come on. Pull foot!"

One of the houses in the center, a sturdy two-story structure of squared logs, was larger than the others and evidently the designated refuge in case of attack.

"That's old Squire Winslow's house," Randall panted as they swung toward it across a stubby field. "Him and me fought the monseers and Indians with Sir William Johnson in '56."

As the two men came nearer, they saw that two ostlers and a man in homespun were slamming heavy shutters into place. The planks were loopholed for rifle fire.

A boy of ten or twelve ran out of the house, carrying an old drum. At once he began to beat the alarm, pounding on the thundering cowhide while the sweat ran off his freckled face. There was something ominous in that steady booming. After him came a tall man in a blue broadcloth coat. He had a brace of pistols thrust in his wide belt, and he was buckling an old cavalry saber into place. His lined, white bearded face brightened as he saw the two newcomers run up to the house.

"Ho, forest runner, we need the help of your rifles," he said. Then he peered more closely. "Long John Randall, egad!"

"Big as life, squire. Are you in command here?"

"Reckon I am. At least, this is my house."

The boy beside them was standing with his feet wide apart, his eyes round with excitement as he wielded his drumsticks. The rolling thunder of the old

alarm drum went out across the settlement like ripples in a pond.

Now people came streaming toward the squire's house from all sides. The men carried rifles and powder horns, and they looked behind them as they ran. A few dropped on one knee, to fire back into the woods behind though nothing was yet visible behind the screen of autumn-tinted underbrush. Their women toiled across the fields with infants in their arms and older children clinging to their skirts. Some carried small bundles of personal belongings. Somewhere off in the woods they could hear a Ranger's conch horn steadily calling.

All of the shutters were up. Sawyer and Randall were still standing in front of the door as the last of the refugees went streaming past them. Inside the house, they could hear the squire's calm voice:

"One man to a loophole. Jason, do you take command of the upper floor. Put those children in the corner, Mistress Fletcher. Hurry with that fire, Ned, the bullet molds are in the left hand cupboard."

Suddenly Sawyer stiffened. He could see dark figures moving along the edge of the forest to the west. An instant later half a dozen white puffs appeared along the line of the woods. The bullets sang past them. Randall flung up his rifle and fired in return, then shook the weapon at the distant marksmen and stepped inside the house.

It was very dim inside, once the door had been shut and the heavy bars dropped into place. Sawyer groped his way to a vacant loophole. The only lights were the little oval patches of radiance that came in the loopholes to spatter on the floor, and the dull glow of the fire on the hearth where the logs were beginning to crackle. An old man in a scratch wig tended the big kettle over the fire, while a woman handed him pewter spoons and slugs of bullet metal and a pair of candlesticks to be melted up.

On a table that had been pushed to the side of the room, two men in shirtsleeves were rolling paper cartridges. Beyond them, Sawyer could see the white faces of children huddled in a corner. A woman said in a flat and dreary voice:

"So it's bullet and scalping knife again! God help us all!"

Long John Randall had been leaning against the log wall with his rifle thrust out a loophole. Now he stiffened, and an instant later the crash of his rifle rang out. The report was deafening in the confined space. A thin wisp of smoke drifted back through the loophole. An instant later Randall had dropped the butt of his rifle to the floor and commenced to reload. His ramrod rattled in the barrel.

Sawyer fingered the lock of his rifle and peered out through the loophole. It was probably sheer folly for him to have come to this settlement, but he couldn't help it. There were some things from which no man could hold aloof, in the flame-tipped hell this once peaceful frontier of New York Province had become.

THE grim figures along the edge of the woods were clearer now—Mohawks and Cayugas painted for war. Then the whole line of the forest swam in smoke as every tree and bush seemed to break out in a strange white blossom that drifted away on the breeze after a few seconds. Many bullets thudded into the stout walls of the house. The attack had definitely begun! They heard the ragged notes of a bugle, calling across that now deserted clearing.

Two Iroquois darted at top speed for the furthermost house of the settlement. Sawyer fired, and saw one of them go down in mid-stride while his rifle flew a dozen feet away, but the other ducked into the cabin. A few minutes later dense smoke began to curl up through the roof

in a dark and ever thickening cloud. After a while some flames appeared along the eaves. Their bright, angry tongues were scarcely visible in the sunlight. Somewhere along the wall a man said bitterly:

"That's my house! The painted devils—"

The last of his words were lost in the dull crash of his heavy musket.

Above the scattered noises of the fight there now came a new sound. It was something that every frontier settler knew—and dreaded. The wild, fiercely melancholy Mohawk scalp yell drifted down on the breeze. Someone else had died!

The rifles and muskets of the defenders were crashing steadily now, and the air inside the house was rank with the stench. Women were coughing in the smoke. The place looked like a dim inferno, with the tense figures of men standing at the loopholes and only the flickering glow of the fire for light. The boy who had beaten the drum poured a handful of smoking bullets onto the table from a mold, and began to trim the edges with a short knife. Now and then he paused to suck his scorched fingers.

A man at one of the loopholes dropped his rifle and staggered back with both hands clutching his throat. Blood spurted between his fingers. The next time Sawyer looked around the man was lying motionless on his face.

Three of the scattered cabins were burning now, and the acrid smell of blazing wood penetrated into the improvised fort even through the odor of powder smoke. Men were cursing as they loaded and fired. At intervals Randall hastily cut another notch in the stock of his rifle, then thrust his hunting knife back into the wall close to hand.

Half a dozen Senecas ran for another cabin, one that stood closer to the Squire's house. Three rifles spat flame and smoke from the windows of that cabin. It had not been abandoned like the rest! Two of the savages went down, and the rest took cover. The man beside Stephen Sawyer gasped hoarsely:

"It's Chris Weyland and his folks, God shield them! They must have failed to get away to join us here!"

"Two more men to the western wall," the squire's crisp voice cut in, "Three men! Chop another loophole in that shutter. Cover Weyland's cabin against any attack."

So far only the Iroquois had taken part in the attack on Hogan's Bush, but another factor now entered the fight. A platoon of men in black uniforms trotted across the clearing with their muskets at the trail. Even above the shrill note of the Mohawk scalp yell there rose the savage jeering of the embattled settlers as they saw that hated uniform.

"Aye," growled the farmer who fought beside Stephen Sawyer. "Tunics of black and orange! Butler's Rangers. The murderers of Cherry Valley! Come on, lads, give the murderin' Tories a dose of lead. The scuts!"

Randall was standing erect while his ramrod whirred in the barrel. His mouth was full of wadding as he reloaded.

Then came a sudden rush. Many figures swarmed about the Weyland cabin, which was ringed with smoke but still holding its own. The Rangers closed in on it, the Iroquois advanced from all sides. A dozen tall Senecas and Cayugas rushed for the door in a body. The planks splintered under their smashing rifle butts. The door broke inward. A moment later Chris Weyland had been killed on his own threshold and the Iroquois had gone swarming inside. They were squalling like catamounts.

In the squire's house, in that smoky and flame shot dimness, men were cursing through their teeth. A woman had commenced to scream.

The back door of the Weyland cabin was jerked open. A young girl ran out, her long hair flying behind her, and a

small boy followed. One of the black-clad Rangers caught the boy in a dozen strides. He cut his throat with a single motion, then hung the still writhing body across a rail fence.

A pair of tall Cayugas had bounded in pursuit of the girl, shaven heads gleaming in the sun. The firing from the squire's house rose to a fury as the defenders tried to cover the girl's flight, and one of the Cayugas went down. The other hurled his hatchet. The keen blade flashed like a bolt of light and struck home, the girl went to her knees. The Cayuga leaped on her and tore loose the scalp.

A wailing yell of triumph rose above the noise of the firing. The Iroquois shook the long scalp in the air, and one of the settlers cried in a strangled voice:

"Oh God, these muskets are no good! Can't one of you forest runners reach him?"

The Cayuga was already slinking back to cover, but Long John Randall had frozen into immobility at his post. His shoulder snapped back from the shock of the recoil as he fired. Smoke spurted back through the loophole, a thin wisp arose from the firing-pan. The savage turned half around and fell prone in the trampled grass. Randall's teeth were bared like those of a snarling wolf as he jerked his knife loose from the wall to cut another notch in his rifle stock.

The whole village was afire now, a roaring furnace that sent dense clouds of smoke drifting across into the forest. Only Squire Winslow's house still held out, ringed with the smoke of a stubborn defense but every minute invested more closely.

THE Tory bugle sounded again, and a massed column of Butler's Rangers trotted forward with muskets at the trail. They pounded ahead through the drifting smoke like beasts of ill omen, led by a single horseman at whose stirrup ran a Mohawk painted scarlet. Cayugas and Senecas ran out before them like the spokes of a fan. Above the noise of the battle, the squire's voice came in a deep shout:

"Every man up! Women reload the spare pieces. Here comes the assault!"

The front ranks of the storming detachment were carrying a heavy tree-trunk to batter the door. They came forward with shrill yells, while the settlers bayed defiance and the noise of their firing rose to a steady drum-roll.

Stephen Sawyer fired and loaded and fired again, till his arms ached and the long barrel of his rifle grew hot to the touch. His whole mind was concentrated on the swift lining up of his sights and the need for hasty action. The injustice a court-martial had done him was forgotten. His personal danger of recognition and arrest was unimportant. There was no reality in life but this grim and deadly fight.

The house was full of dense clouds of powder smoke, while women ran to and fro with fresh muskets and the children screamed in fear. The whole building seemed to rock and shake to the steady crashing of the guns. Somewhere in the shadows a wounded man was laughing with a horrible monotony.

Many of the men carrying the tree-trunk had gone down, but the wave of Tories still swept forward to the door itself. Sawyer fired his rifle through the loophole in the portal. An instant later the squire shouldered him aside, and fired both his pistols at point blank range.

Suddenly the assault ended, as quickly as it had begun. One moment a horde of Rangers and Iroquois were swarming all about the door. A minute later the tree-trunk lay neglected across the bodies of the men who had carried it, and the survivors had fallen back to the shelter of the nearest cover. The immediate danger was over—but from behind every tree trunk and hummock around the house

the besiegers kept up a steady fire on the loopholes.

Sawyer stepped back from his post and hurried across the room for a fresh supply of bullets. They were still hot as he dropped them into his pouch. He groped his way to a powder keg that stood at the foot of the stairs. When he had filled his powder horn, no more than a few pounds of the precious black grains remained in the bottom of the keg. He looked up to see the squire standing beside him.

"There is no more powder," Winslow said, answering the younger man's unspoken question. "We cannot even last the day if they keep up this pressure."

"Any chance of help?"

"Who knows?" The Squire shrugged, and even in the dim light Sawyer could see that his face was pale and gaunt. "The man who warned us rode on toward the river. He may bring help. But—I have heard cannon firing from the direction of the Middle Fort. It may be that Butler's main body is attacking there."

Sawyer stood erect and looked about the room. The glow of the fire still shone fitfully through the drifting clouds of smoke. Along the loopholes was a shadowy line of men, crouching tensely to fire or standing back to reload. Half a dozen bodies lay close to the wall, and a woman on her knees was moaning softly beside one of them. On a sudden impulse Sawyer ran up the stairs.

Here the darkness was even more intense, without the light of the fire. The choking smoke seemed even thicker. He groped his way into the nearest room, where the stub of a candle burned fitfully in the draft. A middle-aged woman was firing from the window there, crouching at the loophole while her loosened gray hair lay along the stock. She did not turn around. Lying against the wall beside her, a wounded man was coughing out his life while his chest was a glistening mass.

Sawyer found a vacant loophole at the end of the hall and thrust out his rifle. From here, on the second floor, he could see most of the blazing settlement. Men were running to and fro through the smoke, killing the livestock and setting fire to those hay-ricks that had not been kindled by sparks from the burning buildings. Some were wielding axes to girdle and kill the fruit trees. The cabin that had first been fired was now no more than a mass of glowing coals, with the stone chimney standing stark and blackened above it.

Sawyer's tanned face became set in grim and terrible lines as he looked out at that scene of death and destruction. War was bad enough in any case, but at least there was something constructive in the swing of a regular campaign and the clash of formal armies. These frontier raids were savagery without excuse. Then he saw a Mohawk armed with a bow skulking close to the house, and again he settled down to the grim business at hand.

Confused shouts came from across the house, somewhere on this upper story. For a moment Sawyer did not understand. Then he caught a single word that sent him bounding down the shadows of the dim and smoky hall. The word was "Fire!" An instant later he was peering out a loophole in the eastern wall.

Some Mohawks had crept close to the house by means of a gully on that side. Arrows were streaking up toward the roof of the house—shafts that left a trail of greasy black smoke behind them. Fire arrows!

There was only one thing to be done about this newest peril. The roof had dried in the sun, and it would burn like tinder. Sawyer spun on his heel to face a woman who stood near him with some blood-soaked bandages in her hands.

"What about water?" he snapped. For an instant she stared at him with lackluster eyes. She seemed dazed.

"There's a well under the stairs," she said at last.

Thank God the house was well designed for defense! Sawyer ran downstairs and shouted for Winslow, but no one answered him. Instead, Long John Randall arose from where he had been crouching beside a huddled figure near the door. The lean rifleman sighed, and settled his fur cap more firmly on his head.

"The squire's done," he said shortly, "Shot through the throat. I promised him the varmints'll not get his scalp."

"Then I guess we're in command. Come on, they're using fire arrows now."

All the men that could possibly be spared—and they were few enough—went pounding up the stairs. Randall and Sawyer climbed a shaky ladder to the attic under the roof, while someone passed a lighted lantern up to them.

The place was full of smoke, not merely powder fumes but the acrid scent of burning wood.

"The roof must be already afire," Sawyer snapped.

"Aye. Look there!" Randall's long finger pointed to a flickering tongue of red flame that was licking through the shingles.

In one bound the younger man was across the attic and smashing at the roof overhead with his war hatchet. The shingles gave way, and there was a loud crackling as a burst of flame swept in.

"Water!" Sawyer shouted. Someone thrust a leathern bucket into his hands, and he hurled the water up at the fire. It hissed and crackled, and steam mingled with the smoke. The fire was quenched in that particular spot, but more blazing arrows stuck quivering in the roof every minute while the flames began to eat through in half a dozen other places. At the same time they heard the rifle fire redouble. Someone shouted from below:

"For God's sake come down here! They're rushing the door again!" The men in the attic dropped the buckets and once more siezed their rifles.

The thing was hopeless. Leaning wearily on his rifle a little later, Stephen Sawyer knew that the end was close at hand. They had beaten off that assault, and more bodies were sprawled outside the door, but the cost had been heavy. Nearly half the original defenders were gone, and the survivors had scarcely a score of powder charges per man. Worst of all, the whole eastern half of the upper story was ablaze with the fire completely beyond control.

They called a hasty conference in the main lower room of the house. Powder blackened men, gaunt women, pale and frightened children—all who could still stand were gathered there. Long John Randall climbed up on the empty powder keg. He was a scarecrow figure, standing there in his fringed buckskins in the light of the fire, while ever thickening clouds of smoke rolled down the stairs from the blazing upper story.

"There's no use tryin' to stay here, folks," he said. His voice was hoarse and dry. "We'll be burned out like rats in half an hour. I say we all get together with the women and children in the center, and try to cut our way through to the woods."

"I don't keer what we do," a woman said dully, "My James and his brother Ned and our boy Peter are all gone." She swayed a little as she stood there, and another woman threw an arm around her stooped shoulders.

There was silence as they all considered it. An aged farmer in leather breeches and a knitted jacket had been nervously fumbling with his worn hands about the muzzle of his ancient fire-lock. Now he piped up, in his querelous voice.

"What's the use o' that, rifleman? We'll never get clear."

"Better to die under the Tory rifles than burn here," Randall said, closing his jaws with a snap. There was a low murmur of assent. A bearded man in a leather apron, wearing a blood stained bandage around his head, touched the

heavy blacksmith's hammer thrust in his belt.

"Aye, forest-runner, far better. I reckon I can take a few of them hell-cats with me before they lift *my* hair."

They gathered in the front room in a close column, ready to merge to a compact mass as soon as they were outside the door. The last powder was distributed, the last bullets passed from hand to hand. Even the children caught the spirit of this forlorn hope, and remained silent.

Sawyer stepped to the door and took hold of the heavy oaken bars. There was a twisted smile on his haggard face. He had no illusions in regard to the chances of this mad attempt, and he knew that this was the end of his trail. Well—what did it matter? A major battle or a soon-forgotten skirmish, the result was the same in the end. At least this was much better than a firing squad. He loosened and cast aside the first of the bars.

THEN a bugle pealed. Its brazen notes sounded clear above the rattle and thud of the musketry, the hoarse Tory cheering, and the fierce scalp yell of the Iroquois warriors. Its lilting call was subtly different from the ragged notes of the Tory bugle that had hitherto dominated the fight. Long John Randall gave tongue in a deep bellow:

"*Aiie—yah!* I know that call. Open the door, lad! Pull down the bars!"

With fingers made clumsy by haste and hope, Sawyer loosened the bars and pulled the heavy door aside. Sunlight splashed in upon them, and drifting smoke from the burning cottages, but as they all came streaming out of the house they saw something that set them cheering hoarsely.

Out from the edge of the woods to the eastward of Hogan's Bush came a long column of men in uniforms of brown and red. The Tryon County militia! Sawyer's own regiment! They pounded forward at a trot, while the scattered Tories and Indians began to ebb back in great confusion. Then whistles trilled, and the brown clad militia swung from column into line while the long rows of muskets dropped down to the level.

"It's the Canajoharie men!" someone shouted with a sob in his voice. "I can see Bully Mason leading them."

The ranks of the militia swam in smoke as the front rank fired by platoon. The roar was like the pounding of a giant surf. Tongues of red flame spat viciously through the smoke as the second rank fired. Then, sprinting ahead through that dun mist, appeared the officers with drawn broadswords in their hands.

"Forward!" they shouted, "Come on, Tryon County!" Wildly yelling, the militia went forward at a dead run, going in with the bayonet.

The Iroquois were already slinking off into the forest by two and threes. The officers of the Ranger detachment were making frantic attempts to rally their badly disorganized men. They just had them in some semblance of formation, ready to meet the charge of the militia, when they found themselves attacked from the other side.

Smashing through the screening bushes, riding at a gallop with reins loose and spurs busy, came a full troop of Continental dragoons. Clad in blue tunics faced with white, leather helmets and jack-boots gleaming, heavy sabers flashing in the sun, they swept down on the Tories like a wolf-pack in full cry.

The impact of those three-score furiously galloping horsemen was the last thing needed to complete the rout of Butler's Rangers. The cavalry rode clean over them, long sabers flashing down and rising red. When they had passed, the Tories were fleeing on the heels of their Indian allies.

Sawyer felt a strong tug at his elbow. Long John Randall's nostrils were quivering, and he was fingering his rifle.

"Come on, lad," he muttered, "Let's

pull foot. These folks don't need us any more. Our place is in the woods. Let's join in the hunt."

The two of them trotted across the field to join the men dogging the trail of the fleeing Tories. As they passed a patrol of the militia, a lanky sergeant shouted:

"Look to the forest hell-cat! One of Morgan's macaronis. By zooks, it's Long John Randall! Was it you we just rescued, John?"

The lean rifleman flicked his thumb to his nose as he ran past.

"My butt to you, Phil Graft!"

At the edge of the clearing Stephen Sawyer paused to glance behind him. Hogan's Bush was a shambles. One more settlement had been given over to the flames, another group of houses would be only piles of ashes while the timber wolves came to prowl around them at dusk. The squire's house was burning fiercely, and the little group of survivors stood clustered forlornly in front of it. At the moment they faced the coming winter without even a roof over their heads. The cost of a nation's liberty was heavy! It was something greater than any one men or group of men.

Not till then did Sawyer suddenly realize that his crisis had come. The raid was over, his truce with Randall was at an end. His personal problem had become important again. At that moment he found himself looking into the blackened muzzle of Randall's rifle.

"Which is your company?" the Ranger snapped.

"The first. Captain Tom Woodruff."

"There he is yonder. Come on, and keep that rifle of yours at the trail."

A stocky militia captain, letting his blood-stained broadsword hang from one wrist while he took off his cocked hat to wipe the sweat from his eyes, glanced up at the pair of newcomers.

"John Randall, by zooks! How're ye, John? And Sawyer! Where in—?"

Then the tall rifleman interrupted. Sawyer expected the brief denunciation that would mean his doom, but instead Randall dropped one horny hand on his shoulder and turned to face Captain Woodruff.

"Ye know me of old, Tommy?"

"Reckon I do."

"Then do me a favor. Forget that this lad has been away from your company longer than the regulations allow. He was—lost in the woods. But in this raid he did three men's fighting. There's right good stuff in the younker."

The militia captain shrugged, and settled his hat on his head.

"Whatever ye say, John. Join your squad, Sawyer." He raised his hoarse voice. "There's still work to be done. Forward, you men of Tryon!"

Hastily Sawyer thrust out his hand to the ranger.

"I'll not forget this."

"Shucks, 'tis nothing." Randall's gaunt face creased in a broad grin. "None of us like this war, but I reckon ye'll be a better soldier for this little experience. Look sharp, the company is moving. Good hunting!"

The men of Tryon County were baying like a wolf pack in full cry as they swept forward on the trail of the fleeing Tories and Indians.

BOARDERS AWAY!

By WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

"AHOY! The schooner!" Bennett's hail beat faintly against the whistle of the wind, over the smoking seas of the North Atlantic. His lifeboat drifted down upon the pitching schooner *Hagedorn*. The gray afternoon was fading.

The call came back:

"Ahoy, there in the boat! Stand by to take a line!"

Aboard the schooner a young man was shouting with his slender hands cupped about his mouth as he clung in the mizzen shrouds. The wind lifted his hair until it stood like a pale helmet above his dark face.

The schooner's captain watched with imperturbable, placid calm. He stood, hands thrust deeply into the pockets of his ragged canvas coat and head thrust forward against the wind—a thick, dumpy man. The rain dripped from the bowl of his stubby pipe.

"Heave . . . awaaay. . . ."

Fifty yards out the lifeboat hung on the crest of a smoking roller. It shot down into the trough and the snarling seas caught at it. Bennett and another worked at the oars; a third bailed with a mechanical lift and fall of his arms.

"All right, Olsen!"

The heaving line seemed to crawl toward the laboring boat. Its snaky coils were momentarily black against the leaden grayness of the sky; it dropped across the shoulders of the man who bailed.

The lifeboat crawled slowly into the schooner's lee. For an instant, as the *Hagedorn* rolled heavily, it rode even with the schooner's rail. Eager hands reached for Bennett and the others—pulled them in. The *Hagedorn* dropped back into the trough of the sea and the boat swung wide. The white fingers of a wave reached for it, spun it mightily, tossed it back. It splintered against the schooner's flank.

Bennett heaved his heavy-set shoulders, and said, "You might have saved

that boat, mister. Good seamanship would have done it."

His two companions lay where they had fallen on the planking of the deck but he stood, holding to the fife rail. He was big with heavy eyebrows and a harsh jaw—a dark and arrogant man.

"I remember you now," said the blond young man. "I was a plebe. You made a speech at Annapolis when the class of '14 graduated. My name is Shadlow."

Bennett stared somberly. Salt water dripped from the stiff cloth of his jacket; there was white salt rime along the edge of his dark hair.

"Yes," he answered in his flat voice. "Yes."

A half a dozen men picked up his two companions; helped them along the deck to the crew's quarters forward. Overhead the schooner's canvas slatted with the harsh rattle of musketry fire as she came about. Blocks creaked; her stern lifted as she slipped down the face of a mountain of water.

Up on the poop Captain Clabber Jawn stood with his hands thrust into the pockets of his old canvas reefer while he watched with his placid eyes. Young Shadlow looked at him, looked at Bennett. Back at Annapolis there had been few who didn't know that Emil Bennett was the one who had cut the stripes from Clabber Jawn's sleeves.

Shadlow said, "I'll take you below, sir. You want sleep and a hot drink down your hatch, I reckon. There's no use waiting for the skipper; he'll not leave the deck before the wind eases."

Bennett was a Naval Academy man—big, with humorless eyes and a face which was flintily Puritanical. All of the Bennetts had been Naval Academy men; a Bennett had been killed on the gun deck of the *Bon Homme Richard* when the first twenty-four pounders burst.

He sat in Clabber Jawn's chair in the tiny cabin of the *Hagedorn*. The three days adrift had left little sign on him other than the dark stubble of beard and the salt grime across the faded shoulders of his jacket.

Young Shadlow came and leaned carelessly in the doorway. His blue shirt was open at the neck; a battered cap was pushed far onto the back of his pale hair. Bennett nodded at him with curt disapproval.

"Morning, sir," young Shadlow said. "Feeling better, are you? The wind's about blown itself out—it'll be good hunting weather right soon now."

He threw back his head and laughed while Bennett looked at him. Sunlight streamed down the open companion; it washed the cabin skylight with gold. The faint creak of blocks and the song of tight cordage drifted to the older man's ears.

Bennett said tonelessly, "I don't remember you."

"Shadlow," the other told him again in his careless voice. "Class of '17. You talked about tradition, I remember. It was good stuff, sir."

Bennett grunted—this flippant youth in the Navy. Where was the discipline? If young Shadlow were on the *Nampa* now—ensigns acted differently there. Bennett's eyes brightened for an instant as he thought of the *Nampa's* white decks, waiting guns. He was to take command of her at Berehaven.

"You were crossing on the *City of Trenton*, sir?"

"Yes."

"We picked up her SOS," young Shadlow went on familiarly. "Nothing we could do—we haven't much speed. Torpedoed?"

Bennett nodded, his face as changeless as if it had been cast of metal.

"Off the Irish coast. Most of the boats got away but we lost touch in the storm."

A seaman, bare armed and much tattooed, brought enameled cups and a steaming pot of coffee.

"You're an Old Navy man," Bennett said harshly.

The seaman looked at Bennett from hooded eyes as he straightened. It was Casey.

"Aye, sir."

"How long?"

"Goin' on eighteen years, sir."

"Yes." Bennett nodded slowly. "I remember. You were on the *New York*."

"I been a turret man. I was in your—" Casey paused and his lips hardened as he looked at the stripes on Bennett's faded sleeve, "the cap'n's turret, sir. Then I come with Clabber Jawn."

"You came with whom?"

There was a mechanical stiffness in Bennett's voice. He turned his head and looked at Young Shadlow but the latter was paying no attention. The hostility in Casey's eyes deepened.

"Clabber Jawn—him that was Cap'n Galt before he changed his name to get back into the service."

Casey's footsteps died away on the companionway steps. Young Shadlow lighted a cigarette; flipped the match away. Bennett's eyes were cold.

"John Galt," he said. And again, "John Galt!"

He stared at young Shadlow. The youth's eyes held the same veiled hostility which had been in Casey's. If Bennett felt it, he ignored it. He rubbed slowly at the stubble of beard along his jaw.

A voice boomed down the companionway—a deep voice filled with a vast aliveness. Bennett remembered. That was John Galt's voice.

"Mister Shadlow!"

"Aye, sir!"

Young Shadlow went, his soiled cap pushed far onto the back of his head and the limp cigarette dangling between his lips. Bennett watched him go with a sardonic bitterness in his heavy face.

Discipline! Orderliness! Tradition!

THAT was what he had told them on that June morning three years before when the class of '14 was graduating and young Shadlow was a plebe. He remembered it well. The shadows of the leaves had woven a golden laced pattern in front of the platform where he had stood. Two days before a court-martial had said that John Galt was unfit to wear the uniform of the United States Navy.

Discipline!

That was what made a Navy: That was what won wars! Orderliness and Discipline backed by Tradition. It had always been so; it must always be! It had carried Farragut's ironclads past Fort Jackson and St. Phillip; it had lifted the heads of dying men in the acrid smoke of the *Constitution's* gun deck; it had crowded the fighting tops as Dewey steamed into Manila Bay.

He glanced about the tiny cabin of the *Hagedorn*. A lumber schooner! For an instant his mind flashed back to the *Nampa* lying at Berehaven with the fleet. Decks gleaming with a scoured whiteness in the December sun. The sparkle of polished brasswork. Seamen in navy blue who saluted smartly on the quarter-deck.

He frowned thoughtfully as he looked at the tarnished gold of the stripes on his sleeve. The salt water had done that—he would have to get a new outfit when he took command of the *Nampa*.

Clabber Jawn said in his calm voice, "It's Captain Bennett now, isn't it? I congratulate you, Emil."

Bennett looked up. He was vaguely surprised that there was no bitterness in John Galt's voice. In a way he dreaded the meeting but his duty was clear.

Clabber Jawn stood in the doorway where young Shadlow had stood. His hands were thrust into the pockets of his ragged canvas jacket; his unlighted pipe hung, stubby and black, between his teeth. He was not as tall as Bennett—heavier through the shoulders.

"You hold a commission, Galt," Bennett said flatly, uncompromisingly. "That seems—strange."

John Galt's face was a little older,

Bennett thought. It was burned to the color of aged leather; there were two patches of gray at the temples. Except for that it might be the same face which had looked at him through the musty dimness of the court-martial room three years ago. The eyes were different though. The cynical amusement was still there but there was something else—a hardness, a ruthless indifference. It reminded Bennett of the sun glare on gray ice.

"There's a war," Clabber Jawn was reminding him. "You didn't suppose that I would stay at home, Emil?"

Bennett drummed his finger tips against the table while he looked. He noted the frayed canvas jacket, the stained and battered cap, the civilian trousers, and his lips tightened. There were no signs of rank. His anger grew with a slow flame.

Tradition! Navy style!

John Galt had used to laugh cynically at such things. His laughter had slapped at their faces back there in that dim and musty court room.

"You are—?"

"Lieutenant, junior grade, Emil," Clabber Jawn said carelessly. "They needed men who had been to sea. It wasn't hard. Galt is a good name—but it was easily changed."

He sat on the edge of the table, hands still thrust into the pockets of his canvas reefer, while he swung a foot and looked down at Bennett.

Bennett said:

"You didn't tell them that you had been—dismissed from the service, Galt—that you lost a ship through negligence? You didn't tell them that?"

Clabber Jawn's foot was swinging like a slow pendulum. The schooner rocked to the long swell, righted herself again. Behind Bennett's head the sea lamp creaked in its gimbals.

"No, I didn't tell them that, Emil."

"Why not?"

Bennett was surprised at the harshness which had crept into his voice. Clabber Jawn was smiling—that cynical, mirthless smile which, even in their midshipman days, Bennett had hated.

"You're not going to lecture me on tradition, are you, Emil? You forget that we once lived together in Bancroft Hall."

"I haven't forgotten that you were cashiered for gross negligence."

"And now you are Captain Bennett," Clabber Jawn said in a voice which was too casual. "I'm in command of a lumber schooner, Emil. Two hundred tons—Hoboken to Liverpool. We'll drink to your promotion, eh?"

He picked up one of the enameled cups and lifted it toward his lips. The cold coffee was bright with a shiny scum.

Hot anger flowed over Bennett. Insolence! John Galt had learned nothing. Those charges, lying back in the Navy Department in Washington with the dust thick on their covers, had taught him nothing—nothing!

"I'm sorry, of course," Bennett said heavily. "My duty was clear. You laughed at orders and you lost your ship. The Navy has no place for you."

"So the court felt."

Bennett sat with his thick hands clasped on the table in front of him. The anger had gone, leaving him cold, judicial, impersonal. Clabber Jawn stood up.

"The evidence could not be discredited. You disobeyed orders and went ashore. I brought you those orders, Galt."

"Yes."

"If you had not gone ashore your ship would not have been lost."

The smoke rose in a gray veil in front of Clabber Jawn's inscrutable face. He stood with the canvas reefer hunched about his neck, his hands still in the pockets.

Bennett felt the red anger beginning to creep upward into his brain again. What right had John Galt, who had dishonored the uniform which he had once worn, to

stand there with that twisted smile on his lips and the tobacco smoke veiling his eyes? Bennett heard himself speaking as he had spoken on that afternoon three years ago.

He said thickly:

"You are not fit to hold a commission, John Galt. You have no right to a commission. I have told that to you once—I tell it to you again. We need men but we do not need—an officer who has been cashiered!"

His voice cut through the quiet cabin. Clabber Jawn took his pipe from his teeth and poked at the bowl with a hard thumb.

"Theory," Clabber Jawn answered him in his faintly sardonic voice. "You were always long on theory, Emil. And yet, I am here, on the *Hagedorn*, in the North Atlantic. *That* is not theory but concrete fact. I command the *Hagedorn*. Here—now—my word is law."

"My feelings are not personal," Bennett said heavily.

Through the open companion came the creak of blocks, the soft slap of the water against the schooner's hull. Bennett rubbed the black stubble on his cheeks with thick fingers.

"You lost your ship," he repeated angrily. "You had no discipline. You laughed at tradition—at doing things Navy Style. It was for that they took your stripes away."

"And now?" Clabber Jawn asked softly.

"You have a radio?"

"Yes."

"My duty is clear. I shall radio to Berehaven—have you relieved from command. When we reach port I shall prefer charges against you for having concealed the fact that you had been cashiered when you accepted another commission."

"No," Clabber Jawn said. "No, you'll send no radio, Emil."

Bennett stared angrily from beneath his heavy brows. John Galt had always been able to infuriate him—even when they had been midshipmen back in Bancroft.

"Why not, John Galt?" he demanded flatly.

Clabber Jawn smiled sardonically as he paused at the foot of the companion steps. There was certainty in his calm, even voice.

"You forget, Emil. *I* am in command of the *Hagedorn* and we are at sea. Tradition, Emil, Navy tradition. A captain on his own deck, eh?"

His shadow lay black across the raised sill of the doorway. Bennett stared somberly at the tarnished stripes on the sleeves of his jacket. John Galt was right.

Clabber Jawn said, "A girl died. Perhaps you didn't know. She was dying the night I went ashore."

His steps echoed hollowly in the companionway.

Bennett suddenly was very tired. After a while he slept again with his forehead pillowed on the faded sleeves of his jacket. He had been three days adrift in an open boat.

THE *Hagedorn* loafed over a glassy sea. In the west pillars of scarlet cloud crawled out of the horizon, steamed upward in the crimson sunset. Bennett stood on the poop watching the faint swirl of the schooner's wake; beside the wheel Clabber Jawn and young Shadlow talked in low voices. The evening was full of peace.

It came with the sudden slap of a blow. The voice of the masthead lookout wailed with exultant excitement.

"Torpedo off the port bow, sir! Torpedo off the port bow!"

Bennett saw it then—a white streak of wake a thousand yards away. It ran like a dog with its nose to the ground; it came on with an appalling swiftness. Five hundred yards away it leaped clear of the water, settled back, broached again—came on running hard.

He was surprised to find that he was perfectly calm; his perceptions were terrifically clear. Clabber Jawn had taken the wheel. Bennett shot a glance at him. The stubby pipe was still between his lips as he watched that white streak which sped toward them out of the sunset.

Bennett saw what was necessary. Clabber Jawn would put the wheel over hard—the torpedo would pass in front of their bows. It was so very simple.

The knowledge that Clabber Jawn was holding the schooner to her course struck him like a blow. The man was mad! Beside him young Shadlow stood watching.

"Port! Put your wheel over, you fool!"

Bennett was vaguely surprised that it was his voice which had shouted. For a second he saw that Clabber Jawn was looking at him—there was dark amusement in Clabber Jawn's eyes.

Then Bennett knew. It all seemed to come back to him in that fractional instant while he braced himself against the searing thunder of the explosion.

He could hear Admiral Klug's flat voice as he explained:

"Q-ships, gentlemen. Suicide ships, if you will! Fill the holds with lumber and invite a torpedo! It takes guts to take these ships out, gentlemen. It takes guts, I repeat!"

Yes, Bennett remembered now. He had forgotten, for his thoughts had been full of white decks and shining brasswork and seamen who saluted on the quarterdeck.

The torpedo struck far forward.

The sunset dissolved in roaring, bellowing thunder—in flame bathed smoke. A geyser of water crawled to the schooner's mastheads; dropped back in surging and unnatural surf. A giant hand had flung Bennett to the rail. He struggled to his feet.

A splinter had slashed at young Shadlow's face; the dark blood soiled his hair. It irritated Bennett vaguely that he was still grinning. War was a serious business—even on a Q-ship. Clabber Jawn stood, feet braced wide apart, hands on the useless wheel.

The *Hagedorn* was settling slowly by the head. The port shrouds of the foremast had been blown away. Rope ends dangled loosely. A great pile of wreckage lay where the forecastle had been.

Clabber Jawn said, "Get the carpenter and see how badly we're hurt, mister."

"Aye, sir!"

"Olsen! Get the panic party going!"

Bennett watched with curious incomprehension in his eyes. It was strange. And yet this was war.

Navy way!

Olsen, at the head of a dozen men, ran up and down the torn deck shouting wildly. Six of them were trying to lower a boat. The after falls jammed; the forward falls gave way. The boat dropped, bow first, into the water. It capsized and floated slowly away. Olsen and his men were grinning. Other men lay flat on the deck pressed close to the flimsy deckhouse built amidships. They, too, were grinning.

Young Shadlow loped along the deck, his cap pushed far onto the back of his head and the blood a dark smear along one cheek.

"She'll float," he said. "There's thirty feet of hull blown out of her but she'll float."

"Good!" Clabber Jawn's voice whipped exultantly along the deck. "Gun crew flat on your bellies behind the rail!"

From force of habit Bennett looked at the watch on his wrist. It was a quarter to six. Clabber Jawn swung toward him suddenly.

"Go with the panic party, captain," he said. "Get in the boat."

"No," Bennett answered him. "I'll stay."

For an instant Clabber Jawn looked. Then he smiled—that same mirthless, sardonic smile which Bennett remem-

bered over three years and two thousand miles.

They lay flat on the surface of the deck watching the scarlet surface of the sea through the scuppers. A hundred yards away the lifeboats pulled slowly away from the stricken schooner. Olsen, in an officer's cap, stood at the steering oar of one of them.

"Sparks!"

Clabber Jawn's voice was low—little more than a whisper but it carried clearly to the men on the deck. A red-headed youth crawled toward the rail.

"Aye, sir."

"Radio still working, Sparks?"

"Still working, sir."

"Anybody near?"

"A destroyer—the *Chandler*. She's just over the horizon. I told 'em we'd been torpedoed, an' to stand by until they hear from us again."

"Good lad! Once the sub breaks water keep quiet. Understand?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Young Shadlow, sprawled forward with his gun crew around him, grunted with excitement. Bennett suddenly felt it. He had forgotten the white decks, the polished brasswork—forgotten everything except that empty expanse of scarlet sea—those men who waited.

Young Shadlow said hoarsely, "Periscope, sir! Dead a-beam and in the eye of the sun!"

BENNETT saw. Four thousand yards away, in the smear of the sunset, a black stick was crawling through the water. It grew taller. The placid surface of the sea boiled gently. The stick broadened—became the sinister bulk of a conning tower.

Clabber Jawn said:

"You'll remember this day, captain."

Water cascaded off a sleek back which glistened in the crimson light. She lay quietly there on the surface of the water—a slim black shape.

"Too far," Clabber Jawn was saying under his breath. "It'd be luck if we hit her from here. We've got to get 'em in close—and they're suspicious."

Bennett rolled on his side. Over his head the canvas slatted idly. He looked at Clabber Jawn's ragged canvas coat; at young Shadlow's stained hair.

Unreal! And yet this was war. That seemed odd.

War was for the gray battleships waiting with their guns in Berehaven—for the slashing destroyers in Queenstown. War wasn't for rotten-timbered lumber schooners. It was odd!

The U-boat was moving slowly toward them, a feather of white at her bow. Men were scrambling out of her conning tower, clustering about the slim gun on her deck.

Bennett saw a white pin point of light; gray smoke drifted away on the breeze. The shell screamed over them and dropped into the sea fifty yards away. A slim geyser, its edges tinged with scarlet, crawled into the air.

Five minutes to six!

"Steady," Clabber Jawn was cautioning.

His voice was even and unafraid. It rang with a vast exultation. Young Shadlow was grinning; above his sun-darkened face the hair lifted like a pale helmet.

Bennett thought, "I once made a speech to him!"

The pin point of light flickered again.

Up on the poop the wheel dissolved in a blast of flame. Jagged slivers of iron whined over the heads of the waiting men; they spatted softly against the loose sails. The sunset rained splinters.

"Steady it is," young Shadlow repeated.

The submarine lay broadside a thousand yards away. Bennett could see the gun crews clearly as they worked about the breeches of their rifles. They had manned the after gun now. Men stood

on the conning tower watching the *Hagedorn* through their glasses.

"Too far yet," Clabber Jawn said evenly. "She'll come closer. We can't take chances!"

Suicide ships! Bennett remembered how Admiral Klug had looked on that day back in Charleston. He wondered a little that he wasn't afraid.

The pin points of light winked like fireflies on the U-boat's deck. The reports drifted across the water with a dull *boom*—quite different from the rending *spang* of the shells. Clouds of smoke drifted up in the dusk.

Young Shadlow whispered, "Dance is about to open up."

He lay with his chin propped on his folded arms. Bennett saw no fear in his brown face; there was no fear in the faces of the men who lay about him. Casey, who had been a turret man before he sailed with Clabber Jawn, spat brown tobacco juice at the foot of the mainmast.

"Will they come in?" Clabber Jawn asked under his breath. "They've got to come in!"

A shell struck in the tangled mess of wreckage which the torpedo had tossed up forward. The force of the concussion beat at Bennett's face like the blows of an iron fist. The air was alive with whimpering metal—beside the deckhouse a man groaned once and then lay still.

"She's coming in!"

Clabber Jawn's whisper was like a triumphant shout. The U-boat was crawling forward. Men were grouped about her after gun watching; her forward gun still fired slowly, methodically. Under its steel blows the *Hagedorn* was dissolving.

Eight hundred yards.

Bennett looked at his watch again. Ten after six. Clabber Jawn watched; young Shadlow lay with his head pillowed in his arms. A seaman lay motionless against the deckhouse with a black stain soiling the planking of the deck.

Five hundred.

The moon, riding high above the horizon, was turning into an orange ball as the night dropped. The sea was growing dark except for where the moonpath left a trail of silver.

"Ahhhh!"

The breath escaped from Clabber Jawn's lips in a long disappointed sigh. Bennett looked and cursed softly. The U-boat had changed its course and was opening the range again. Both guns were firing. Shells thudded in the schooner's waterline; beneath the waiting men the explosions were muffled and dull.

"They're suspicious," Clabber Jawn said. "They've been fooled before. We've got to wait."

The minutes ticked by with a dreadful slowness. Darkness dropped like a sooty mantle but the moon lighted the sea with a golden bath. Against it the submarine stood out like a sinister shadow. Now and again the flash of her after gun lighted the sea.

Bennett wondered vaguely that a ship and men could stand so much. Others of the gun crew lay in formless heaps; as many more carried the biting slash of splinters.

A quarter to seven.

"Cautious! Cautious!" Clabber Jawn whispered bitterly. "They don't understand why we don't sink."

The moonlight was a white flood. It bathed the ravaged deck of the schooner with a pitiless brilliance. Bennett looked. White decks and polished brasswork were very far from this. He looked at the huddle of tight faced men who lay about the deck-house and wondered why he should think of seamen in navy blue who saluted when he spoke to them on the quarterdeck.

Tradition! Discipline!

Yes, it took that to make men lie, uncomplaining, beneath a hail of death while they waited patiently for their one, brief moment. It took guts—and tradition—to go down to the sea in the suicide ships!

Above his head the canvas hung in tatters from yards which had been cock-billed by a giant hand.

"Coming in, sir!"

"Coming in!"

Clabber Jawn chewed on the stem of his stubby pipe as he watched. Bennett watched him curiously as he lay there in his canvas coat and battered hat. He thought that he understood now why John Galt had been able to stand and laugh at the court which had cut the stripes from his sleeves.

"What do you make the range, mister?"

"Six hundred, sir."

There was a creamy curl of water at the U-boat's forefoot. She was sure that the schooner was deserted, Bennett guessed—sure that there was nothing which lived on those battered decks.

Three hundred.

She came on, the water lapping at her lean flanks. Behind her the wake boiled with a creamy silver in the moonlight. Bennett's chest was tight as he watched.

Two hundred and fifty. Two hundred!

She lay there, like a silver fish, broadside on. Bennett could hear the voices of the men on her deck. For an instant time seemed to stand still. He wondered why he should think of the *Nampa*—he would never know a moment like this on her white decks.

"Now!"

Clabber Jawn's voice rose like a battle trumpet. It filled the night; it thundered upward to the stars in exultation.

Men were leaping to their feet. Bennett saw young Shadlow throw his weight against a lever—the shattered walls of the deckhouse collapsed and the muzzle of a fifteen-pounder nosed the wind.

There were tears in Bennett's eyes somehow. He found that he was shouting wildly as he leaped to his feet and raced forward. Men spun wheels. A shell clanged home giving metallic tongue; steel rang against steel as the breech snicked shut.

"Fire!"

It was young Shadlow's voice singing in the night. The glare lighted the raped decks of the schooner; Bennett heard the brassy tinkle of the empty cartridge case as the gun slid back in its cradle.

He saw with a vast clearness.

The conning tower of the U-boat exploded in a sheet of crimson flame. Voices cried out. Men ran along the deck.

"Fire!"

The twin periscopes of the submarine toppled into the water with majestic deliberation. The blast of the gun ripped at Bennett's cheeks. Clabber Jawn's voice was roaring up into the moonlight.

"We've got him, lads! Come on! Come on! He can't submerge! He'll fight it out with us!"

Dark figures swarmed from the ruined conning tower a hundred yards away. They scuttled along the deck; clustered about the two guns. They, too, were made of stern metal, Bennett saw. It would be a battle to the finish.

The U-boat's guns flamed red and orange. Bennett heard the whistling scream of the shells; their flash was like a giant blow before his eyes. Singing steel whimpered in the moonlight. Casey, a brass-bound shell in his arms, sagged to his knees—dropped forward on his face.

"Get the forward gun!"

It was Clabber Jawn's voice. He was taking the shell from Casey's limp arms. In the flash of the gun Bennett saw young Shadlow's face. It was laughing; his hair lifted like a pale helmet. There were five men left about the gun now. The U-boat had drifted in until it was less than fifty yards away.

"Fire!"

Flame wrapped the U-boat's forward gun. When it had gone Bennett saw that there was nothing but smoking scrap where the gun had been. A half a dozen dumpy figures ran aft; passed the wrecked conning tower. The after gun spat wickedly.

THE world dissolved in flame. A giant hand picked Bennett up in its fingers and hurled him away as the furnace doors of hell swung open—clanged shut again. He heard a man cry out drunkenly.

He was lying against the wrecked poop. He lifted his head and looked at his watch. The hands had stopped at five to seven. The muzzle of the fifteen-pounder stared drunkenly at the sky. Dark shadows dotted the planking of the deck. Bennett sighed.

The rail had been blown away. Out on the dark water a silver ladder led to the moon. Bennett saw her. Drifting in like a great silver fish while a half a dozen men still worked her after gun. Brave men too, Bennett thought.

He heard Clabber Jawn's voice from a great distance. He heard young Shadlow laugh. Somehow he was mildly surprised; he had thought that they all were dead. He had thought that everyone was dead except those seamen in navy blue who saluted on the bleached quarterdecks of the ships at Berehaven.

Clabber Jawn was shouting, "Grapple her! Come on! Come on, you pirates! Boarders away! BOOOARDERS AWAAAAAY!"

Bennett closed his eyes wearily.

Boarders away! Tradition! The words crawled up and down in front of his brain. Tradition! Boarders! They didn't fight that way any more. It was strange. That was the way they had fought in those long dead sea battles when tradition was in the making!

He stood up as the consciousness began to flow back into him.

A half a dozen men were following Clabber Jawn toward the schooner's shattered rail. Clabber Jawn went in great leaps, yelling as he went. Men swarmed down onto the steel deck which grated against the schooner's broken side. Young Shadlow was laughing.

Bennett laughed, too. He jumped, felt the iron deck beneath his feet. A man rushed at him. The night was filled with the great shouts of men. A light glowed suddenly at the base of his brain and everything dropped away into a bottomless well of blackness.

AN ENSIGN, standing with a companion behind Captain Bennett, laughed sarcastically. His words carried clearly across the *Nampa's* scoured quarterdeck.

"Tramp steamer," he said. "There's dozens of 'em going out and coming in every day. They don't let a little thing like a war interfere with their money grubbing."

She was nearly opposite. Bennett had been watching her as she threaded her way through the warships which lay at anchor. She puffed along like a fussy old woman, her plates streaked with rust and the tiny gun, mounted on her fantail, looking absurdly feeble. Two flimsy houses had been built in her well decks, he noticed.

The man beside young Stanley laughed again discreetly. One did not laugh too loudly when the Skipper was standing there by the rail.

Bennett sighed.

After all they couldn't know—*he* hadn't known. You couldn't *tell* a man about that empty ocean out there which formed the hunting ground of Clabber Jawn and his kind. Men in nondescript clothes leaned against the tramp's rail as she drew abreast of the *Nampa*.

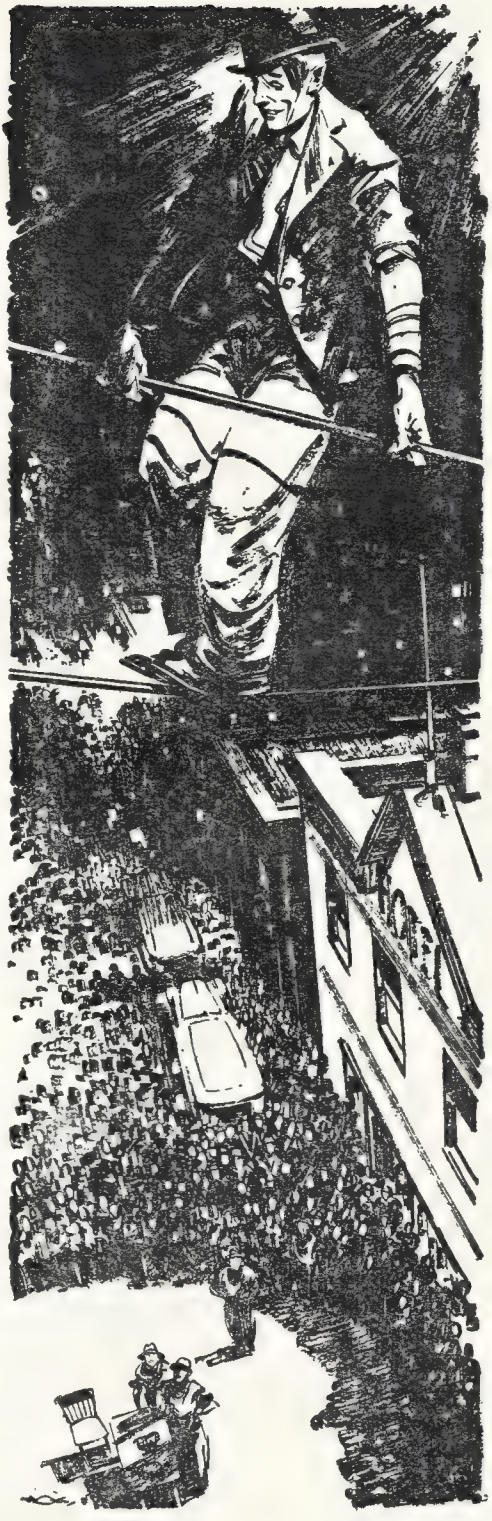
Bennett's eyes were glued to the tramp's bridge.

A dumpy man stood there, hands thrust deeply into the pockets of his ragged canvas coat. There was a stubby pipe between his teeth. Beside him stood a youth with a sun-darkened face and pale hair which was like a helmet.

Bennett lifted his hand to the brim of his cap—held it there until the scarred tramp had passed on her way to the open sea. And, up on the bridge, Clabber Jawn saw and understood.

STUNT MAN

By ALFRED BATSON



THE ADVENT of the stranger in the Boston Cafe swerved Gowdy's mind from the perplexing question of whether it was a subterfuge or bad manners that kept the faces of the two men in the half shadow behind the door so close to their plates. He had about decided it was the former and his vigilance had born fruit.

He had seen that the face of the taller man was marked by a livid scar along the left side of his chin and the profile of his companion paid the price of a badly flattened broken nose.

Gowdy had a pet theory that a man's character could be read in his eyes and he noticed that those of the scarred man were beady, shifty and sullen. An appraisal of his partner's was impossible as he had never looked up. But Gowdy had seen his mouth, thin lipped and small—almost as good an index as his eyes would have been.

Their overseas hats and the campaign ribbons on the shoulder straps of their overalls had not satisfied Gowdy that they were a part of the hundreds of people who thronged Milesburg's main street for the annual American Legion Carnival and Midway.

He had to admit to himself that besides their faces, which he didn't like, there was another reason for suspicion and that might be a product of his own vivid imagination. But to Gowdy it was a real reason nevertheless.

Their meal had consisted of watermelon, porterhouse steak, half a dozen ears of corn apiece and apple pie *a la mode,* in the order given.

In all his years running the Boston, he could not recall having ever seen farmers eat native corn on their one holiday of the Fall. Invariably these Georgians were frugal, bringing their own food and eschewing the Boston's justly famous menu. Armistice Day to them had always meant a combined business and pleasure jaunt to town—at little expense. The bank kept open to receive their Fall crop money, the wife and kids got a brief trip to the Midway, the free attractions got the bulk of their interest, then home again, not to emerge until Spring.

Yet these two were letting their appetites roam.

Further ruminations were stilled by the entrance of the stranger whose appearance in itself was enough to make Gowdy forget the men near the door. He forgot them so completely and failed to see the scarred man suddenly thrust his napkin before his face, and his companion quickly gulp into his coffee mug. Then both looked up cautiously, stared and a moment later, evidently satisfied, they smiled, and waggishly shook their heads.

Nor did the stranger observe the play for he had asked the cashier for the proprietor and was being shown where Gowdy sat, well in the rear.

As he threaded his way through the maze of tables Gowdy had opportunity to scrutinize him.

He was young, perhaps thirty, hatless and his suit looked as though it had been slept in. But beyond that was something that held Gowdy's eyes as though they were riveted.

The newcomer walked with a pronounced limp. Instead of his arms moving at the usual angle, the left hung down motionless from his shoulder as though fixed, while the right swung out from the body, seemingly on a hinge. In addition there was an awkward stiffness as he moved his head.

"What kind of a guy is this?" Gowdy asked himself. "He looks like a wrestler who had been slammed around . . . no, he can't weigh more than a hundred and thirty . . ."

But he noticed with avidity as the stranger drew nearer that his eyes were blue and frank, straightforward.

"You the owner?"

"Yeh. What do you want?"

"I want to bring two hundred people in here tomorrow night to eat three hundred dollars worth of food. The cost to you is twenty-five dollars. How does it sound?"

Like most restaurant owners Gowdy was cautious. He had already decided that this was the prelude to a touch for a free meal.

"Aw, these tricks. I lose money whenever I . . ."

"I know," the newcomer cut in with a grim smile. "Only in this case the trick might be on me, not on you. Mind if I sit down?"

Gowdy liked that. Most men with propositions would have been seated and well started on what would eventuate as a free meal in the time it took this one to get down to business.

"Nothing wrong in that. Come ahead."

The restaurant proprietor knew the outward signs from long observation. This case was the same—the man was broke and on the bum. It would be for a meal or cash. Often it was both. But at least this one dressed it up with a proposition and that showed he wasn't as lazy-minded as most. And this one was different for another reason. There was no hint of whine or cringe in his voice or manner. His unflinching blue eyes looked straight into Gowdy's and the hard-boiled restaurant owner already knew when the man sat down that whatever the proposition he was already sold. The eyes had done it.

"Believe it or not," the stranger began, "but I'm a stunt man." There was a brief smile and a hasty glance down

at his clothes, a glance which Gowdy thought lingered on his hands. "My name is Palmer . . ."

Gowdy cut him off with a swift intake of breath.

"You . . . Say, I beg your pardon. You, Palmer? Palmer the Great?"

The stranger nodded.

"Why, you're a little guy. I thought you'd be a big husky after what I read about you in the paper."

Palmer's face clouded. "The paper?"

"Sure. We got a wide awake sheet here, goes all over the South. It printed a lot of stuff about you."

Palmer bit his lip. "That's just what I was afraid of," he said.

Gowdy bent forward but before he could ask if he had heard aright Palmer went on.

"You know why I'm in town, then. I'm wire-walking at tomorrow's street show. I'm working on a three hundred foot wire, between the two flagpoles on the main street, right outside your door. I'll be a hundred feet up over Broad Street. Can you see it?"

"Yeh," Gowdy said, "I can see it."

"The sidewalk out there will be crowded. Won't it?"

"If your act is anything like what we've had before, it will. These people go nuts over a flash stunt. And you ought to be better than most."

Palmer passed over the compliment. "Here's where you come in. I know by experience that I'll hold the crowd for a half hour, hold 'em tight. I'll have everybody in town out there with their mouths so wide open and for so long that when I come down they'll be hungry, plenty hungry. Then the nearest place to get food is the Boston . . ."

"Sounds like you know your business," Gowdy enthused.

"But there's more. These country people like to meet and talk to show folks. They'll want to talk to me, ask me how I do it and all that. Now here's the gag. I got a little feature I do on the wire—eat from a table while sitting on a chair, balancing both of them and myself all the time. I'll unfold a banner from the table, like this, 'Meet me at the Boston after the show. Best food in town.' How's that?"

"Pluperfect," Gowdy grinned. "You may be a kid but you're a showman. Want my twenty-five now?"

Palmer was forced to laugh. "I wish everyone I approach down in this country would have the eye for business you have. Most of 'em are skeptics."

"Say," Gowdy broke in. "Do you mean to say you actually sit on a chair up there, balancing yourself and a table and eat a meal?"

"That's the idea," Palmer grinned. "It's not so hard."

"Phew!" Gowdy sat back and fanned himself with a menu. "I should think you'd fall."

"Sometimes I do," Palmer smiled though his face was hard. "That's what people come to see, not to see me stay up there."

A light began to dawn on Gowdy. "That's why your arms, that limp . . ."

"I've broken almost every bone in my body."

"Why do you keep it up?"

"Well, it's my living. I like to keep moving." Suddenly Palmer paused and a hard glint came in his eyes. "When I'm not molested and things are right I make good money."

"What's the hardest thing you do, that table stunt?"

Palmer shook his head. "A back flip, I guess."

"Why is that so hard?"

Palmer looked away. He swallowed and cleared his throat before continuing.

"It's hard for me because I'm carrying a twenty foot balancing pole, a twenty foot length of one inch pipe. And with these . . ." he coughed ner-

vously before going on, "with these arms and hands it isn't easy."

"Then . . ." Gowdy understood why one arm hung motionless, why the other swung out awkwardly from the body. "Then you've busted 'em?"

"So many times I've lost count. It's a wonder they stay in their sockets."

Gowdy regretted having asked the question. "Too bad," he said confusedly.

"Too bad for *me*," Palmer said, "good for somebody else." His eyes fixed Gowdy's, his voice was huskily intent. "If I had good arms and any power in my hands I'd probably be hanged as a strangler or worse, eventually."

As he spoke his hands clenched, small, pale hands that Gowdy knew could never strangle anybody.

"Strangler . . . Why. . . ?"

"Let it pass. I talk too much."

Gowdy had an impulse to probe further, but his attention had been attracted over Palmer's shoulder to where the two men near the door were talking to the cashier. They were glancing back toward the stunt man and laughing. Suddenly one of them shot a hand into the open cash drawer and grabbed a pencil. Then he found a piece of paper in one of his pockets and scribbled something on it. A moment later he gave the note to a waitress and pointed to Palmer's back. Gowdy was nonplused.

"How about the stunt with the banner?" Palmer broke in on his thoughts. "The spectators down here like to meet a performer. I'll come in here and eat a meal, they'll come in with me. That's where you cash in."

"Sure, sure," Gowdy said, his mind on the scene that had taken place behind Palmer's back. What was the connection between these three? Was it a stunt after all? Perhaps this wasn't Palmer but an imposter, planning to blow out of town . . . a thousand thoughts raced through his mind. But those blue eyes fixed him; he thought they were worth a gamble.

"You want the money now," he put out a feeler.

"No, after the act," Palmer said. Then, grimly, "Maybe you'll get a free ad." He laughed hollowly. "Don't worry, I'll be around to collect; when it's only twenty-five I always turn up. If it were a thousand a guy wire would snap and I'd be in a hospital for six months. When I got out I'd owe the hospital the thousand. That's the way it works."

"You broke?" Gowdy asked.

"Better say badly bent."

"But your equipment?"

Palmer laughed. "I'm in it, one suit."

"Haven't you worked lately?"

"Sure, three weeks ago in East Texas—" Suddenly he hesitated, wondered if Gowdy had caught that "East Texas." If he had, the restaurant proprietor gave no sign. To cover himself, Palmer went on. "I got paid for it, too. But the money and the equipment—it's a long story."

HE AROSE and held out his hand. Gowdy took it and found it flabby, with no pressure. But the eyes looked unflinchingly into his and Gowdy would bet on him. There was a split second when Gowdy thought the refusal of the money had been a ruse to gain his confidence for bigger game. But that passed when Palmer's voice was strong and reassuring. If it were a con game, it would be a new one on Gowdy.

"Say," Palmer broke in suddenly. "Where can I find a cheap place to sleep tonight? It's got to be a dollar or under."

Gowdy thought a moment. "The nearest place," he said, "is farther along on this side of the street, the Stanton House. Turn to the right outside my door, go past the Surprise Store, then

you come to the bank. Pass that, cross the little alley on the far side and you're at the Stanton. Tell 'em I sent you and they'll give you something for a half or seventy-five."

Palmer reviewed the directions. "Turn to the right, past the store, past the bank, then across a small alley—"

"You got it," Gowdy said. "The alley's about three feet wide, the only thing in it is the bank's burglar alarm. Cross over and the Stanton's right there."

"I'll find it. Well, thanks for everything. I'll be around in the morning to borrow a table and chair. And you'd better have a banner made—"

He was about to turn away when the waitress arrived.

"Those two men that just went out gave me this for you."

Gowdy saw the hesitancy with which he took the paper. "What two men?"

"Two farmers who sat behind the door," Gowdy broke in.

"Farmers my eye," the girl interrupted. "The tall one with the scar had white hands and he wore a big diamond. Find me a farmer around this neck of the woods with lily white paws . . ."

Palmer wasn't listening. He was reading the note.

Gowdy was watching him and the scene brought back memories of a torrid afternoon in Toledo years before when he sat behind Jess Willard's corner. He remembered the confidence with which the champion stepped out to meet the challenger. But he remembered more vividly how a split second later Willard struggled to his feet after that first crashing right hook. He looked to his corner for instructions and Gowdy saw again the deathly pallor of his face. Surprise—wonder—fear! The inconceivable had happened! Gowdy saw it all again in Palmer's face—breathless, his temples throbbing, his mouth agape, his hands shaking, his nerve gone.

"They weren't farmers," he said slowly.

He crumpled the paper and dropped it. Then, before Gowdy could ask what he meant he limped hurriedly through the restaurant and out the door. They saw him pause and look up and down the street. The pair had been swallowed up in the crowd. Slowly he turned and started toward the Stanton.

"He talked kind of crazy a couple of times," Gowdy said. "Hanged for a strangler . . ."

The girl was absorbed in the note. "Well I'll be . . ." she said.

Gowdy peered over her shoulder and saw that it contained only two words:

"Hello, Elmer."

PALMER was awakened by an almost imperceptible sound that shot him to an upright position in the bed. He listened. Then he heard it. Someone breathing—almost at his elbow. A cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

He muttered to himself that if he had a pistol he'd end the grisly farce then and there. If they were going to continue to hound him like this they deserved it. If only his arms were good that he might fight them, strangle them . . .

He leaned forward on one elbow and reached for the light on the washstand when an ingratiatingly sweet voice cut the blackness:

"Well, if it ain't little Elmer." The voice died as the room became brilliantly alive. "Fancy finding you here. If it ain't a small world."

Palmer stared into the sullen eyes of the scarred man.

"What are you doing here, Butch?"

"Now Elmer, don't talk like that. We're old friends—"

"Quit calling me Elmer," Palmer snapped. "What's the game this time?"

"I brought a friend to see you, Elmer." He opened the door and admitted his companion from the Boston, the man with the broken nose. "Elmer, this is

Joey," Butch said, "you boys ought to be friends—"

Palmer felt a fool to be sitting idly in bed while Butch went on with this farce. "I wish to God I could kill you two after what you've done to me."

"Now Elmer, that's no way to talk—" Butch began. Joey cut him off.

"Listen, stunt man. Get rid of any ideas of killing us, or anything else, see. If you want to start—"

"I'll have you two arrested for breaking into my room." No sooner had he uttered the words than he realized their futility.

"Go ahead," Joey growled. "The buzzer's right there by your head. Go on and call the hotel. Get 'em all up here and see where you stand then. And see where you stand after we prove to 'em we're all old pals." His lips were thin and tight, his voice grating.

Palmer knew Joey Pacetti well enough to appreciate that he would stop at nothing. Butch might be bigger and play the fool but it was the chunky Joey who had the brains, Joey with the broken nose sprawled on his face. Joey who— He knew much more of Joey now than he had a month before. He sought wildly for some way out. His mind was a daze that made his stomach sick. He could feel his hands shaking beneath the bedcovers.

"You two got no business following me after what you did to me the last time."

"Now Elmer," Butch grinned. "Don't say things—"

"Shut up that crazy line, Butch," Pacetti snarled. "We got things to talk about with this guy." He turned to Palmer. "Nothing happened we know anything about. What was it?"

"You know damned well," Palmer shot back. "That policeman died and those hick cops held me as an accessory—"

He was interrupted by a roar of laughter.

"So he died," came from between Joey's thin lips.

"Ain't that a shame," Butch said.

"Yes, he died, and that bank president isn't on his feet yet," Palmer said. "I've learned a lot about you, Joey, since I saw you last. That little job in the post office in Wisconsin. You're wanted for murder up there. And a job you both did in Oklahoma—If it interests you, there's a reward out for each of you, dead or alive. And there's one for Shorty too. Where is he?"

The laughter ceased abruptly. Butch crossed to a rocking chair. Joey sat on the window sill.

"Stunt man," he began, boring Palmer with his black, pig-like eyes, "you didn't happen to—"

"No," Palmer said truthfully. "I didn't. But if I'd known you two would follow me here I would have. Where's Shorty?"

"Shorty's asleep right across the hall," Joey's voice fell, he chose his words with care and spoke distinctly for emphasis. "Shorty's keeping out of sight today. But don't let's change the subject. Now listen to me, you stunt man." His eyes narrowed to black jets. "If we're taken up for that Texas job, don't forget that you drove into that town with us. And that fillin' station man who asked if your limp came from riding so long looked like he'd have a good memory. You got a strut they can't forget, stunt man. And remember this, it was your advance check for your wire-walking stunt you cashed when we went in that bank to look around."

"He's talking facts," came from the rocking chair.

Palmer knew that he was, knew only too well. Sitting helplessly in bed the realization came to him for the hundredth time that he was caught in a vicious web not of his own weaving. He saw no way out. He was at their mercy,

unless an act of God struck them.

"You be a good boy, stunt man," the frigid voice continued. "If we're taken up, we'll talk. Then where will you be?"

"I thought you were farmers when you picked me up," Palmer floundered for want of something better.

"Tie the can to that," Pacetti hissed. "Tell it to a hick jury. The innocent hitch-hiker thought we were farmers. We pick him up and take him to town. He's out walking his wire and the whole town's watching him. Then something happens. Before they can quit stumbling over themselves in the excitement, the farmers blow. Just tell a jury you weren't help to it. You couldn't make those dumb clucks down there think that wire-walking gag wasn't our front in a million years."

"It's a natural," Butch laughed from across the room. "You're so good you get the whole town watching you, Elmer. Tell it to a jury."

"I've been trying to tell one for the last three weeks," Palmer said weakly.

"So they held you." His listeners howled.

"I just got out three days ago. They grilled me for thirty-six hours straight. They slapped me around and used a rubber hose on me. I couldn't tell them anything. I knew nothing to tell. Finally they let me go, but the hick sheriff sold my wire and props for jail charges. I read in a paper about this carnival and bummed dimes to send a telegram. This Legion outfit sent me fare to get here. Now for God's sake, do me a favor and don't pull anything. These folks have been too damn decent."

As though to hide his smile Joey got to his feet and poured himself a glass of water. Palmer saw him wink to Butch. "Now tell him our story, Butch."

"We were sort of laying over down in N.O. when we came across a paper from this town. Talk about a coincidence. And we see a piece that our friend, Palmer the Great, is in town for the show so we came up to see an old pal do his stuff. And kid, you can do it. I could watch you stand on your ear up there forever."

"Then you're on the level, you're not—?"

"It's this way," Pacetti took over the conversation. "We come up here and where does this hick hotel clerk put us but in a room on a little alley, right next to the bank burglar alarm. Right next to the ding-dong is a window to the bank. We can reach out and touch it, can't we, Butch?"

For a moment Butch was too convulsed with laughter to reply. When he had recovered himself he said: "Yeh, we can touch it Elmer. We just sort of tickled a few of the bars and if the wind blows hard they'll fall in."

Palmer's heart sank with more speed than he had ever fallen from a wire. He could feel the blood leave his face.

Joey was watching him. There was an awkward pause. Suddenly he spoke, so calm and soothingly that Palmer strained to catch every word.

"Listen, Palmer, why don't you be sensible—"

The stunt man caught the implication. He knew the meaning of every tremor in Pacetti's voice. Without hesitation he cut the sentence off in mid air.

"You two go to hell."

Pacetti stared at him a moment and saw the unflinching blue eyes.

"O.K. If that's how you feel about it." He turned casually to Butch. "C'mon, he's sleepy. He's had a hard day. We got a hard day, too."

Obediently Butch got up and followed him to the door. There was no laughter at the latest sally. Pacetti paused near the bed.

"Listen, stunt man. When you're up on that wire tomorrow night, don't you worry about us, see. We want you up there, actin' as good as you did in Texas. But get this and get it straight. If you

blow off to these hick cops before you go up there's no jury in the South that won't believe you aren't part of our game. And if you try anything when you're up there, Shorty will be right under you just waiting to shoot you down so quick you won't know what happened. If anything goes wrong with our act—*our act,* see, you get ready to push up posies."

He went out and closed the door.

Palmer got out of bed and bathed his head in cold water. He smoked a dozen cigarettes, paced the room a dozen times. But he could not forget a word that had been said in the room. He knew they had been right from every angle.

He sat by the window looking out over the darkened town. A gray streak appeared in the east. Cocks crowed. The sun appeared. Shakily he dressed and went out to walk the streets.

He knew then that he would fall that night.

"LADIEES and gen-tle-mun. You are about to witness the most death defying stunt ever conceived by the mind of mortal man—"

Palmer smiled enigmatically as he listened. He had written a brief introduction that afternoon and a local newspaperman had taken it away for "revision."

"Ladiees and gen-tle-mun, we are about to present for your entertainment a man who snaps his fingers at death, who defies the law of gravitation, who sneers, ladies and gen-tle-mun, who *sneers* at death and dares it to reach out and grab him. On a wire no bigger than your little finger he will flirt with destruction high over your heads. On that slender wire which bears his life you will see him walk, run, dance, jump. But most astounding of all—he will sit at a table and eat a *full* meal—"

"Full like the others," Palmer thought.

A fear he knew only too well seized him for the tenth time in as many minutes. To allay it he inspected again the anchorages of the slender guy wires that came down out of the brilliant light above. One was secured to a lamp post directly in front of the bank door, the other to a tree on the opposite curb. He shook it and watched the wire sway. Fortunately there was no breeze.

The introducer lowered his voice and Palmer heard:

"You ladies and gen-tle-mun who are on the sidewalks with your little loved ones, kindly see that they stay within the ropes, off the street, so if the air demon's body should come hurtling down a tangled, bloody mass at your feet—"

Palmer hear a laugh beside him and looked up. It was the drummer in the Legion band watching him and shaking his head.

"I never heard one as gory as that," Palmer feigned a laugh.

"You got your nerve, buddy."

Palmer knew that was just what he didn't have. He was shaking as though with the palsy, shifting nervously from one foot to the other. "Come on, come on, let's get it over with," he found himself muttering.

"Before he begins his death-defying stunts he wants to thank the Southern Telephone Company, and especially Mr. Joe Knowles, its local head and enthusiastic member of the Legion, for the loan of the wire. Also Mr. Homer Trecartin, head of the Trecartin Fence Works for the balancing pole of galvanized—"

"You ought to say something about how I had to argue with that tightwad to get the two ornamental spear heads to dress it up," Palmer thought. "He wanted me to go up with a length of raw pipe."

"And so, ladiees and gen-tle-mun, the Legion Post presents to you—The—Great—Palmer!"

There was a burst of applause. The lights on the street went out and as Pal-

mer was shot aloft in a boatswain's chair the only illumination was from a large arc, directly over the center of the wire.

From the platform that had been erected for him, Palmer paused to look down at the upturned faces. On his right was the black mass that was the bank, next to it, the Stanton. The alley between looked no wider than a thread. Down the street was the Boston.

"Hell, I've worked a lot higher than this."

But the old reassurance would not come back. He was nervous and he knew it.

"No use kidding myself. Best thing is to get out there and I'll forget it . . . Let's see. Guess I'll just run across first . . . thank God there's no wind . . . it seems steady enough . . . those guys are holding all right . . . wish I could have borrowed some thin-soled shoes . . . I've lived in these for weeks, they ought to be thin enough . . ."

He picked up the balancing pole, found a footing with his left toe, bent backward against the platform rail to give himself propulsion and shot out to the guys.

"By God, I got it beat. That wasn't so bad. Didn't falter once. Over to the other side and the ice'll be broken . . ."

Gingerly he started; once his momentum was up he reached the opposite platform with safety. He rested the pole and brushed at his forehead with his sleeve.

A murmur of approval came up from the street, a few handclaps.

"Ain't hard once you get going," he thought to himself. "Get up the speed out there and it's easy. The hellish part is when you stop and waver. Looks hard to you hicks but it isn't. By God, there I am worrying again. Get out and get it over with."

He found a footing, hesitated, then sprang back to his starting place. An auto horn honked from beneath him. The arc gleamed down from a few feet over his head and he began to sweat.

"Now give them the drunk; if I get through that I'm safe."

Taking the pole again he pretended to stumble out on the wire. He turned around and looked down only to waver, falter, stagger . . .

"It's going over . . . I got it beat . . . listen to 'em yell . . . now I'm set . . . wish I could have a plug hat to dress this up . . . pretty good black pants Gowdy loaned me . . . by God listen to 'em . . . they're eating it up . . ."

His confidence restored Palmer fell back in the routine he knew so well. He gave them a drunk, he sat on the wire, he put a nail key over his head and went across.

After ten minutes he *knew*. They were all but rolling in the aisles. After each stunt they yelled, bore down on their auto horns, the band sounded off, small boys walked the curbs. He had them.

He did a back flip that ended with the wire not a fraction of an inch from where it should be. There was but one flaw, and that hardly noticeable. *His arms began to tire.*

But with only ten minutes to go he knew he'd get through. Nothing could stop him. To show his contempt he did a drunk back flip.

HE SAW a man being pulled to the top of the opposite flagpole to help him with the table. The halyards beside him rattled. He looked down and saw another coming up beneath him. This one was carrying the chair with a coil of rope on it.

He looked out into the night. The air was cool. A breeze was coming up. With luck he'd be through before it was strong enough to sway the wire. A pin prick of light appeared and disappeared in the center of a black mass on his right. He put it down for a firefly and dismissed it.

"How is it going?" he asked when the man arrived.

"Say, now, young feller, you're swell. 'By jiminy,' I said to my wife when you did that drunken walk, 'that feller's a wonder.' "

Palmer laughed in exultation. He took one end of the coil of rope and started across to the opposite flagpole.

"Now remember," he said to the man there. "I'll attach the other end to the table. When I signal pull it across slowly to the far side of the guy wires. When I get set drop the rope and let it alone. Whatever you do, don't worry about me and *don't touch the rope.*"

The man nodded and Palmer ran back.

As he reached the platform the table came up. He inspected it and the chair. They were the ones he'd used in the try-out; the notches in the rungs were intact. The plates were taped down securely. A knife and fork hung on strings, Gowdy's sign with them.

He balanced the table on the wire and held it while his assistant slipped the pipe evenly over the cross braces, close to the wire. Then with one hand on the table to keep his balance he took the chair in the other, got a footing and waved to the man on the other platform. The table slid easily—the act would be a wow.

He looked down when a few steps out and saw an automobile come down the vacant street and stop in front of the crowd thronging the sidewalk in front of the bank.

Something clicked in his brain. He began to sweat.

"Damn them, I'd forgotten them . . . if I hurry I can get it over with . . . the crowd's quiet. By God, there's Shorty getting out of the car and speaking to the band! . . . keep your eyes up! . . . keep your eyes up, you damn fool . . . get your mind off . . . We're almost there . . . it's going over swell . . . there goes Shorty back to the car, wonder what he said to the band? Keep your eyes up! . . . keep your eyes up . . .!"

The table stopped at the exact spot he had indicated. Gingerly he brought the chair around, felt along the wire for the notch in its rung and settled it, steadying the table with the other hand. Then he eased down into the chair, controlled the table with his knees and spread his feet along the balancing pole. It was easy.

He waved to the crowd but the abysmal stillness continued unbroken. It looked as though a million upturned eyes followed him. He picked up the knife and fork and pretended to eat.

Suddenly the drums in the band began to roll and simultaneously he heard a muffled thunder off to the right where he had seen the flashing light. The drums were something new! He hadn't told . . .! He was safe now and he leaned over and looked.

His brain raced. It was the bank! He saw the light again—two lights. He knew he was looking down through a skylight . . .!

"By God, they did it . . . just like Texas . . . the dirty thieves . . . the yokels are watching me, they haven't heard any thing. And there's Shorty watching me . . . you dirty crook . . . I'd like to . . . to hell with your threats . . ."

His eyes were drawn from the bank roof to the gray thread that was the alley. Two dim figures hurried along it. The engine of the auto began to roar. The two dim figures were pushing people aside . . .

He screamed at the top of his voice. "Stop that auto . . . stop that . . ."

He saw Shorty lean out of the driver's seat and point something long and thin at him.

The bullet flew past before he heard the sound.

Suddenly the light above him died and he was showered with broken glass from its reflector. Somebody screamed below

him. He was lost in the dark. A thousand voices echoed the scream.

Dimly, unconsciously, he had a shooting recollection that he was over the guys.

As the table left he struck out wildly.

He fell a short distance when something struck his arm. He grasped it and felt the wire burn through his hands—

When he struck a pain shot through his right leg like a branding iron. People milled around him, over him, he was trampled on.

Vaguely through a maze of dancing figures he saw a blue and white sign—"Boston Cafe, Best Eats in Town." Striking out blindly he got to his feet and staggered toward it. Pushing aside the screen door he fell into a chair and buried his face in his bleeding hands.

"HERE he is! Here he is!"

Gowdy's voice came to him through a dull thunder that filled his brain.

"He's crying! He's crying! What the hell are you crying about?"

Palmer saw a crowd of civilians and Legionnaires behind Gowdy. A larger crowd milled to get in the door which was being held shut by three policemen.

Then someone slapped his back. They cheered him, screamed his name.

The fear that possessed him began slowly to abate. He looked up into a sea of grinning faces.

"You're a hero," he heard Gowdy. "That table smashed through their engine hood and they couldn't move. Boy you're—"

"Caught 'em like rats in a trap—"

"—They were a bad lookin' bunch."

"The sheriff's taking two of 'em to the lockup now," Gowdy said.

"If they ain't killed on the way. That crowd—"

"Two of them?" Palmer found his tongue.

"Didn't you see it?" Gowdy yelled. "Don't you know what happened?"

Palmer was too dazed to reply.

"That pipe landed straight upright, went right through the top of the car and the iron arrow on the end pinned that guy like a stuck pig. It must have been some heavy. It went through the top like it was paper, nailed the guy with the sack of money, the guy with the scar who sent you that crazy note, and crashed through the gas tank. He's deader'n hell—"

Palmer's hands came up to his face and his body shook with convulsive sobs.

"What's the matter with him?" somebody asked.

"That slide for life on the guy wire cut his hands. You'd feel it if—"

"Hell, no. That ain't it," came Gowdy's voice. "He's afraid I won't pay him for forgettin' to unroll my sign up there. Hey, Palmer, I'll pay you! Hey, Palmer—Look at the gang awaiting to get in here—"

IT'S HOW IT FEELS

By EDDY ORCUTT

WHEN Dusty Logan got back from L. A., the right side of his face was turning various colors, and he had a fair-sized mouse under his left eye. At first I tried to kid him about it.

"All right, funny-face," I asked him, "who bounced you down the front steps?"

Dusty will push the dial to about a hundred and ninety, in his ring clothes, but he's close-built and so doesn't look as big as he is. He's a sandy, slow-spoken boy, with a way of grinning at you suddenly and then all of a sudden getting serious again.

"What's the idea?" I ask him. "Did this guy level on you?"

He was not much of a boy to talk. He just said: "Oh, yes, I guess he was leveling, all right."

That began to burn me a little bit. I'd sent the boy up to Los for a couple of weeks' work with Bob Flynn, the Pasadena Kid. Leo Kipp was handling Flynn, and the Kid was beginning to make quite a splash — Leo was pushing him hard, and the Kid's people had plenty of jack to back him. I'd figured it would do Dusty no harm to work out against Flynn, and Leo Kipp had promised a hundred and a quarter a week—which was all right dough.

But I hadn't figured Kipp's boy would give Dusty any kind of a pushing around. I hadn't hired the boy out to be anybody's catcher.

"What did you do — set around and take it?"

"Bob can box better than I can,"

Dusty said, "and he hits good and hard." He studied around for a couple of seconds. Then he said: "I think I could tip him over, though, if I hit him with my right hand."

"Why didn't you try?" I got sore.

"Well," Dusty said, "I was working for him."

But you could see that Dusty didn't feel so good—and that it wasn't just a couple of knuckle bruises on the lug that bothered him. Dusty had called the Pasadena Kid by his first name, and I figured right away that there might be some kind of a personal angle between them. Well, there was.

Getting the story out of Dusty Logan was a slow job.

Pasadena Kid Flynn was in the money, and he'd got there in the easy way—he was a natural athlete and a natural fighter, and he came of a rich family in the millionaire village. He was news. He'd made the headlines playing football at the university, getting canned from it, jumping into the fight game, cruising Southern California night-life detours in a high-powered car that every once in a while knocked over a traffic signal or spilled out a load of Hollywood play-girls.

He had natural flash and color. The Legion stadium was featuring Pasadena Kid Flynn in special bouts when Dusty Logan was still boxing fifty-dollar main events up in the cow-country fight clubs. And the low-down was that Dusty and Bob Flynn had been raised in the same town, gone to the same schools, played on the same teams, and fussed the same girls. But Flynn lived in a palace on the Arroyo and Dusty Logan had a room back of the repair garage where he earned his keep.

On the teams, somehow, it was Flynn that carried the ball while Dusty did the blocking. And going to a high-school dance, Flynn's girl rode in a Duesenberg and Dusty's girl took a street car with him, or walked, or sat with him in the back of some other boy's car.

After high school, Bob went to the university and Dusty went to work in a Riverside cement plant that belonged to Bob's dad.

When I first got hold of Logan, he'd just come down from the cement plant, and—listen, I'm not kidding—there was so much powdered cement in the boy's hair that every time the other tramp hit him it looked like a breeze in a flour mill. That's how come they called him "Dusty."

Well, it seems that getting Dusty up to L. A. to work with Bob Flynn was the Pasadena Kid's own idea, not Leo Kipp's. And Bob Flynn just wanted to put the boy in his place again—just wanted to show him that Bob still carried the ball and Dusty Logan did the blocking. Flynn had roughed him all he could—hence the welts on Dusty's lug—and Dusty had stood for it because he figured I'd hired him out for a hundred and a quarter a week of Bob Flynn's money.

And that was why Dusty felt a lot worse than the bruises would account for.

"Why didn't you tell me all this before I sent you up?" I asked.

Dusty didn't exactly know.

"But," he said, "if you could get Bob down here some time I'd like to fight him."

I said: "What you mean is, you'd like to murder him."

And I got Dusty that fight.

The Pasadena Kid was already in line for a main at the Olympic, so Leo Kipp nicked the Dreamland outfit for a nice guarantee, but the bout was worth it. Flynn had a box-office rep, and my own boy was beginning to show a lot of stuff. He was only a fair boxer, but he had plenty of natural speed—and he had a right hand that would ring the bell anywhere it parked.

The boy prepped his head off for his chance with Flynn. If I'd let him, he'd

have spent eight hours a day trying to paste the heavy bag through the gym wall.

Dusty was down fine, cotton-mouthed and nervous as a cat, when the night came and the bell finally sent him away.

That bout was a slaughter.

THE Pasadena Kid is big and dark, with a kind of patent-leather slickness about him—the kind of a fighter that looks plump, over-fed, but isn't. Just smooth. And all fighter—a cold-blooded tiger-cat of a fighter. Dusty spotted him a fifteen-pound pull in the weights, that night, and tore in to take him to pieces.

Flynn battled him to a standstill in the first three rounds, and then went in to butcher him. You see, Dusty kicked away everything he'd ever learned, crowded in wide open, taking all the chances, trying to lay that right hand of his on Bob Flynn's jaw. Hooking at Dusty out of his half-crouch, the Kid rocked him back on his heels time and time again—had him badly hurt before the fourth round began, and spent the rest of the fight punishing him with every punch he knew.

Dusty couldn't hear anything I told him, from the first round on. All he knew how to do was to crowd in, trying—and taking it. Bat Nelson used to fight that way, plodding in and taking it and plodding in for more. I saw him do it, once, for twenty-four long rounds. But Bat's legs were limber, kneeing-in a little to pivot his punches, and his feet were close together, and he plodded in for a chance to punch. Dusty's legs were stiff and his feet were spraddled apart, long before that fight ended, and he shuffled in without any aim.

But I let it go on.

If that beating broke his heart, I figured he'd rather have it broken that way than by quitting to Bob Flynn.

I held on to the towel, and when the tenth was over I wrapped the towel over Dusty's head, so the customers in the aisle couldn't see what had happened to his face, and led him away to the shower.

Dusty showed up at the gym the next day.

It took nerve to do it. We'd had to have a doctor to fix him up, and the patchwork was a thing people would turn around in the street to see, but Dusty came all the way downtown and showed up at the gym.

"You know," he said to me, "I went at it wrong last night."

"Did you figure that out," I asked him, "or is this just guesswork?"

It was all right to kid him about how his face looked, that was not what really hurt him the worst. But he couldn't grin, because his lower lip was taped where a couple of stitches had been taken.

Dusty said:

"Well, I'll tell you one thing—nobody's ever going to do that to me again!"

And that was where Dusty Logan started in to be a boxer. It cost me money—a boxer has got to be a pretty sweet worker before he'll draw the gate that a club-fighter will, and it was a long time before Dusty was any good. But I kind of understood what the boy wanted to do, and I threw in with him.

It was eight months or so before Dusty hit any kind of a stride.

The next two starts, he did not fight a lick. He moved around, pecked his left hand fairly fast, ran, ducked, clinched—countered when the going got too hot, but actually did not fight a lick. The third start was worse. Out at the Ocean Park club they held up our end of the purse and slapped a thirty-day suspension on Dusty. I'd just taken on this featherweight of mine, Willie Kid Morgan, and the customers liked him—they still do. But Dusty got so bad that I couldn't even sell him on a card where Willie the Kid was showing. Once I showed him in Bakersfield for fifty dol-

lars—and, the way he looked I think I cheated the house at that.

But we got stubborn. He worked his head off, trained for speed, sparred with any fighter who could show him something, kept in beautiful shape—and I strung along with him.

When I took Willie the Kid Morgan up to San Francisco to hand that pasting to Dick Lopez, I got Dusty on for a six-rounder against Lew Costello. That was the night he really began to strut some stuff. Costello is no tramp, but Dusty outstepped him all the way—Costello maybe landed three punches, the whole fight—and it went over all right with the crowd.

"I'm getting untracked," Dusty said, on the way home. "I bet I could go in with some of the tough ones, now."

"Pretty soon, though," I told him, "I'd like to see you begin letting go of that right hand again."

Dusty lifted his hand out of his lap and grinned that quick grin of his. He said: "Well, I still got it."

That Costello fight gave him confidence, and he began to show a lot of speed in the gym. He took to working some with Willie the Kid, two or three rounds at a time—Willie piling into him, throwing gloves, and Dusty stepping away, slipping, ducking, making the little fellow chase him. Any time a one-hundred-and-ninety-pounder can get away from Willie the Kid, the big boy is fast.

Then we got a nice break.

Chuck McCue was out on the coast then, picking up lunch money, and the heavyweights began giving him the runaround. He only weighed one-eighty-six, but you know how tough he was. He was old and fat and built like a barrel, but he was mean to handle. He'd work for five hundred dollars in a small club, and he got up to twelve or fifteen hundred at Oakland or the Olympic. But after a couple of months on the coast, none of the boys wanted any of him.

Well, Dreamland had a chance to sign him, and they asked me if I'd let them use Dusty Logan. I think I'd have said no, but Dusty said yes. I signed him.

"But if you spend the whole ten rounds running away from him," I said to Dusty, "it will be all right with me."

That is exactly what Dusty did—and it made a drawing card out of him.

Chuck McCue won that fight by as far as from here to prosperity, but Dusty ran him cuckoo and the mob yelled its head off. Dusty was down to a hair-trigger, fine as a racehorse, and every nerve in his body was keyed to blocking, slipping, side-stepping, getting away. Chuck threw everything in the book at him—hit him a couple of times, of course, and hurt when he hit—but never quite broke through and got to him. And the bleachers gave Dusty a hand, and a pretty good one, too.

Moke Jackson was next, up in Fresno, and Dusty boxed circles around him. Moke had scored six or eight straight knockouts, and the cash customers got a kick out of seeing Dusty step the full ten in a breeze. Incidentally, we scored better than four hundred smackos for the date.

Well, every club in the country has some tough monkey that swings them from his heels, and every club has customers that will pay good money to see somebody come in and razzle-dazzle the tough monkey at the risk of his life and good looks. When Dusty Logan hit his real pace, I had a boy that was made to order for that assignment. We began to make some dough. And Dusty, I think, began to figure that he'd licked that beating that Bob Flynn had handed him. We went quite a lot of places.

And then we got our second shot with the Pasadena Kid.

I DIDN'T go after it, and Dusty didn't ask me to get it. But when the chance came, I took it. Leo Kipp was taking

Flynn back to Chicago in six weeks, and he wanted two bouts for him before they shoved off. On account of this rep Dusty was making, he wanted to get him for a warm-up, then maybe Big George McAuliffe or Soldier Dean, the state heavy champ, for a getaway date. That's how good Leo figured the Pasadena Kid was, and he had plenty of reason to.

I figured that Dusty, the way he was going, had a chance to shade the kid—and I figured, furthermore, that it would do Dusty Logan a lot of good to prove to himself that Flynn couldn't give him the kind of beating Dusty had taken off him the first time.

I was all wrong. That second bout busted my boy wide open.

Bob Flynn hardly laid a glove on Dusty that night, but he showed four thousand fans—and worst of all, he showed Dusty Logan, too—that that first beating still had Dusty licked.

Dusty boxed that second bout in a kind of nerve-racked, high-speed panic that was a dead give-away on what Flynn's first beating had done to him. Because it was Bob Flynn in there—the only man that could really hand out exactly the kind of beating he dreaded—every defense that Dusty had was keyed a little higher than it should have been.

Even when the Pasadena Kid slowed up, making Dusty come to him—trying to get set for a solid punch—there was no steam in Dusty's leads. Every punch was timed so he could block with it, back-pedal, get away. I don't mean to claim that Dusty or anybody else could go ten rounds with Pasadena Kid Flynn and never get touched at all, but through those ten rounds Dusty Logan never stepped into a rally, never threw an honest punch, never took the split fraction of a chance.

He finished the tenth without a mark on him except a little bruise under the right eye and a couple of red blotches around the body. But the crowd stood up and booed for five minutes when the ref handed out a home-town draw.

Leaving the ring that night, I think Dusty would have been glad if I'd wrapped the towel around his face again.

I took him down to the room, afterward, and talked language to him. You know, I liked that boy. I'd wanted to see him box circles around Bob Flynn that night—I'd wanted to see him make up for the times Flynn carried the ball while Dusty blocked the tacklers. I'd wanted to see him make up for the times Flynn rolled around in the Duesenberg while Dusty's girl rode a street car. I'd wanted to see him lick that beating that Flynn had handed him—lick all the beatings. It was tough to see Dusty just sit there with a sick, frozen face and show me how bad a boy could be hurt without carrying any marks from it.

"After all, Dusty," I told him, "you got to figure that Flynn's a natural—he was born with most of the stuff that other boys have to learn. You're learning. You learned something the first time you boxed him, and you learned something tonight. You'll get another chance sometime. And anyhow," I said, "you didn't take any beating tonight."

"It feels like a beating," Dusty said.

There wasn't any answer to that. Dusty stood up all of a sudden.

"Listen," he said, "get him for me once more!"

I said: "You don't want him, Dusty—not right away."

He stood there looking at me. "I'll kill him!" he said. He clenched and unclenched his big right hand.

"Yeh—like you did the first time!" I told him—and I was not kidding.

Dusty was pretty white in the face, but he took it. He said: "You told me I was learning. All right," he said, "get Bob for me just once more. I won't walk in and take it, like I did the first

time, and I won't run away from it, like I did this time. I'll use my noodle."

I promised him I'd get him another bout sometime.

"I want it right away—as quick as you can get it!"

"Dusty," I said, "you're a glutton for punishment!"

But he raised his right hand a little, like a man swearing on the Bible. "No, listen," he said, "that guy will never hand me another beating—and I'm telling you!"

The next morning Leo Kipp wired the Dreamland outfit, asking for a re-match. It seems that Pasadena Kid Flynn wasn't satisfied, either. And Tom Cassidy—he's the promoter down here, offered fifty per cent. of the gross, split sixty-forty. His theory was that there were four thousand fans in town that would pay money to see the Pasadena Kid knock Dusty's ears down, once and for all.

I signed up.

We had two weeks to prep in—and nothing to do except keep Dusty in shape and sharpened up. There was no use trying to give him anything new in that length of time. There was no master-minding to be done. The boy was going to have to go into the ring with what he had, and fight his own battle after the bell rang.

Willie Kid Morgan gave Dusty some sweet workouts in the last week, but about all I could do was pray for luck. There were plenty of times when I wished I hadn't rushed him into that third bout—I've never yet sent a boy in to do or die for his dear old manager, and I've never yet had one of my boys punch-drunk and walking around on his heels. I guess my only excuse was that Dusty Logan wanted that bout—wanted it like hell. And I kind of liked the boy. That's a sentimental excuse, and not a very good one.

Dusty worked. He was in shape and ready when the time came—as ready as he ever could be—and if he was worried, he didn't show it. I was the one that was worried, because I had a notion that Pasadena Kid Flynn would be ready, too.

Dusty Logan had something on his mind, that night, and the wait in the dressing room didn't seem to be as hard on him as it was on Willie Kid Morgan and me.

He gave us that funny grin of his when the call came, at last. "Okay," he said, "here we go!"

The big fight barn was packed to the rafters.

We had to push our way down the aisle from the dressing rooms—there were more people in Dreamland than the law allowed. We shoved into the crowd.

"Hi!"

"A'right, Dusty!"

"Go get 'm!"

People spoke, reached out at us, acting friendly or just staring at Dusty—but the buzz moved out into the mob when we neared the ring, and the buzz grew into a howl with jeers and boos in it when we got to the ring-ledge. There was a scatter of handclapping, but that mob was hostile. It had come to see Dusty massacred.

"Don't let it get you," I said. He gave me that sudden half-grin, but he was still thinking about something else.

Willie the Kid Morgan was in with us, and when Dusty went over to the resin box, Willie said:

"He looks good—he looks all right."

"Do you want the sponge?" I asked him. Willie the Kid's lips were dry, but he tried to laugh.

Then the mob whooped into a cheer.

Pasadena Kid Flynn was all fighting man, and he looked it—every inch. He came piling into the ring in a snappy black dressing-gown, mitting his hands to the crowd and grinning. His grin was not cocky. He was ready to go, and knew it. He limbered a little on

the ropes, went over to the resin box, and then came over to our corner, holding out his bandages.

Dusty got up, and they touched hands.

"Watch yourself," the Kid said.

"Start running, Dusty—don't let him catch you!"

Some fan yelled, and people laughed. Willie Morgan told the Pasadena Kid to tuck in his ears, but Dusty only sat down very carefully on his stool and looked at the floor, still thinking about something. Flynn lifted his hand at somebody in the crowd, turned away and walked back to his corner.

Willie the Kid went over to Flynn's corner to watch the gloves go on, and Leo Kipp sent their big negro handler over to ours. Dusty helped me break the gloves, but I remember I had trouble tying them, knotting the laces and slicing off the loose ends.

My hands were shaking.

Dusty shoved his left at me and gave me that half-grin. He said:

"We'll get 'm!"

The big black boy slapped him on the shoulder and went away, and Willie came back to our corner.

"Okay," he said.

Noise boiled up from the ringside, and the announcer crawled through the ropes. Dusty asked for the sponge on his tongue. It was almost time to go.

The mob was still yelling bye-bye at Dusty Logan and whooping for Flynn when the ref wound up his talk—

I grabbed off Dusty's blanket and Willie Morgan carried the bucket and towel through the ropes. Dusty limbered in his corner, pulled at the rope strands and swung around into the ring.

The bell rang.

FLYNN'S first rush pulled the crowd to its feet, roaring—it was a sudden charge, packed with dynamite. Fighting from a half-crouch, hooking both hands to the body and then switching to the head, he caught Dusty no more than six feet from our own corner and rushed him to the ropes—

But Dusty Logan did his stuff, then.

He caught that rush, rode it, slipped away on the ropes and peppered Flynn, going away, with a left that flicked out like a snake's tongue. He rode the next rush the same way, stabbed his left in hard, uppercut once behind it with his right and then jabbed him off balance with another long left.

Sounds simple, but listen—Dusty wasn't in there this time against a bear-cat swinger like Moke Jackson or a broken-down big-time mauler like Chuck McCue. He was bucking two hundred and five pounds of natural-born class—a limber, sleek, up-and-coming youngster primed and set to score a knock-out in round one. Dusty was in there, too, against the hurt of his worst beating, and the lad who had always licked him. And Dusty was not running away from his beating, this time. He was out-smarting it, out-speeding it and out-scoring it.

Dusty was holding himself down, checking that old panic of his—with every nerve in his body notched up to a speed he'd never shown before, he was holding the speed down to where he could use it. He was using his noodle, and down in the ringside behind his corner, I tried to use mine. But the old lump swelled up in my throat when I watched the boy work. Willie the Kid, grabbing at my arm, was yelling with the mob.

Pasadena Kid Flynn smashed through that round, crowding Dusty every inch of the way without a let-up—but the bell caught him swinging his head off while Dusty bobbed under a barrage on the ropes.

The ringside noise kept going until the bell rang for the second, and then it got worse.

Dusty hit that same pace through the second—then through the third, and then through the fourth. And in that

fourth round the boy fired his right hand twice, going in behind it with everything he had. It stood the crowd up. The Pasadena Kid got away—he was geared to the same high speed that Dusty had turned on—but he knew he was in a fight, and up against a fighter.

Out in the seats, the uproar never stopped—it keyed in the rallies and fired up in a clatter of handclapping at the end of each round, but it never stopped. The mob knew, too, that Dusty was not running away, this time. He was using everything he'd learned in running away, but he was not running. When the mob stood up and roared at the end of that fourth, Dusty got his share of the cheering.

But when he'd rinsed his mouth in our corner, after that round, Dusty said a queer thing. He said to me:

"Not so good."

I guess I swore at him. I yelled something, trying to make him hear. He shook his head again.

"No," he said, "we're going too fast."

Stepping circles around the man that had licked him—boxing the ears off the finest fighter he'd ever faced—that boy tried to tell me he wasn't going so good. That sick, bothered look was in his eyes, and he didn't seem to know he was winning.

The whistle chased me out of the ring.

They went into the fifth.

Make no mistake—Pasadena Kid Flynn was a great fighter that night, too. Dusty had cuffed him dizzy for four rounds, but Flynn came out for the fifth like Jack Dempsey primed for the kill. When he missed—when Dusty's long left stopped his rush and set him back on his heels, he tore in again, weaving and hooking, working Dusty over for one more chance. Flynn was going at tops, and Dusty was just a notch past him.

But after the fifth, Dusty said:

"I can't hit him. I can't get set."

Willie the Kid and I got it at the same second. Dusty had been hit and hurt, we figured, and didn't know what the score was. He thought he was losing. He—

I shoved the salts at him.

"No," he said, "I'll keep going—"

Half a dozen times, I guess, the boys traded right hands in that sixth round—and the going had me crazy. Any minute, I figured, Dusty Logan might crack and go blank, lay himself wide open. But if anything, though, he turned on still more heat. He worked in and out of the Pasadena Kid's attack, stepping like a flash featherweight hitting the high spots. Time and again he slipped a knockout by a split whisker, and countered hard.

Once his own right hand came within a breath of scoring. The crowd was on its feet every second of that round, and when the bell rang I thought the mob's roar would blow the walls out.

Dusty wouldn't lay back on the stool. He hunched forward.

"Listen," he said, "don't throw in the towel!"

I tried to shake his head for him. I tried to make him take the salts. He shoved at me, jerked his head away, kept trying to talk—

I yelled in his ear.

"Dusty, you're winning—you're way ahead!" He looked all right. His eyes tracked. But when he looked at me he didn't see me, and he didn't hear what I yelled at him.

"Dusty!" I tried again.

Dusty shook his head.

"Leave me go," he said. "But don't sling in the towel!"

And in the seventh round it happened.

Dusty Logan slowed to a lope before the first minute was over. The ringside roar shrilled up into a yell, and the Pasadena Kid punched him to the ropes, leveling for a knockout!

I saw it like a nightmare. I saw Dusty's head bob back. I thought I heard

the thud of Bob Flynn's punches—I couldn't have, because the ring-side noise had roared up into high, and I was yelling into it—but I thought I did. I saw Dusty get away, saw Flynn catch him again. Dusty covered—not quite well enough, not quite fast enough—

He lasted out the seventh. He came back to the corner shaking a little and wiping a smear of blood off his lips with the back of his glove.

"What happened?"

I had to yell it again. The noise kept hammering at the ring. Willie Morgan worked at the legs, goggling up at Dusty with his mouth wide open, not making any sound.

Dusty held his mouth tight. He wiped at the blood again, and then I thought he tried to grin at me. He wouldn't talk.

They gave us the whistle.

Then the bell for the eighth.

You couldn't say the crowd was yelling for Flynn to score his kayo, and you couldn't say it was yelling for Dusty to rally and come back. It was just yelling. Up to that seventh, the mob had been yelling for both boys. Through the seventh and into the eighth, it just yelled—a crazy, hysteric scream—

The pace in the ring slowed to a walk.

Dusty Logan still had enough left to block most punches, or partly block them. He had enough left to ride when Flynn charged in. And in the first few seconds of the eighth, Flynn sized it up that way, quit leveling, and began the job of cutting Dusty down for a knockout. It was an ugly job.

Flynn wrenched him with short punches, knocked the gloves away from his face when he covered, began chopping at him with jolts that cut him and hurt him and rocked him back on his heels. Dusty got away slowly. Flynn tracked him slowly, working him over. And then it was like the first time they fought—Dusty Logan cut and smeared, and Bob Flynn dishing it out, dishing it out—

So I saw Dusty's come-back blowing up. I saw him being licked again by the lad that always licked him—saw him taking another beating.

The roar at the ringside got heavy, monotonous—ugly, like that shuffling, slow pace in the ring—and it seemed as if the noise kind of settled at my midriff and stayed there, like a sick weight.

But I hung onto the towel, tight, to keep from throwing it in.

Then—

"Look! Lookit!"

Willie the Kid Morgan saw it the same second that I did. He grabbed me. He didn't yell.

"Lookit!" he said. "Lookit!"

In that flash, we knew what the score was.

Dusty was bloodied and cut and splashed with it, and he was wide open to Bob Flynn's punches—almost. He was hurt. Every smash hurt him. But he was taking those hurts on purpose. His legs were limber, kneeing-in a little, and his feet were still close together—

Up in the ring, the Pasadena Kid chopped the gloves away from Dusty's face with his left hand—chopped the gloves down, smashed with his right, chopped at the gloves again—

Then the mob screamed.

Dusty Logan shifted a hundred and ninety pounds of weight, swung it on the pivot of his left foot, and let go with his right hand.

I did hear that impact.

Flynn banged on the canvas in a silly fall, his feet in the air. He did a crazy roll, tried to get up, then fell over on his side. The referee picked his count out of the noise, knelt down and waved his arm. At "Three," the Pasadena Kid got to his hands and knees. He shook his head, tried to see his corner—

He was all fighting man, that Pasadena Kid. He fought at the canvas,

trying to get up. He made it to his knees—glassy-eyed, every muscle tight. The count went on. He tried to get his legs under him. Then he pitched forward. His arms wouldn't hold the floor away. He went down, sprawling on his face, and the referee crouched closer.

"—Nine!" the referee waved.

"—Ten!"

Dusty was watching from the far corner, and his face was a red mask from the punishment he'd taken. But you could see how he felt.

Dusty Logan was all fighting man, too.

Willie the Kid Morgan and I worked on that face of his, afterward, patching it up. Dusty said:

"It was the only way I could slow it down—get set—"

Even that quick, short grin of his didn't work very well, the way his lips were puffed.

"I had to have a knockout," he said.

I had to either kid him or kiss him. "You're the guy," I said, "that was never going to take a beating any more."

"It wasn't a beating," he tried to explain—

"Well," I said, "it looks like it was a beating."

Dusty said: "Hell! It ain't how it looks—it's how it feels!"

And no matter how his face looked, you could see that Dusty Logan felt all right.

Judge Limits Visiting Hours For Gods

By FOSTER DRAKE

THE Chinese are a prayerful race, especially when affliction comes upon them—which is often. If it isn't plague or famine it's flood or drought. Then they take their household gods and gather in groups praying. They do that daily when occasion warrants and to make their prayers effective it is one of the rules that their gods must first be taken before a magistrate. In effect, he charges the gods to do their stuff.

During the recent drought the constant procession of farmers with their gods proved too much for the magistrate in a village near Hankow. They came at all hours of the day and night, day after day and night after night.

"The path of the righteous is thorny," he reflected, "but leadeth finally to the tree of glory. The reward being great, a few more thorns won't hurt much. Gods or no gods, I've got other things to do and I've got to get some rest."

Whereupon he posted a notice on his office door:

"NO GODS RECEIVED AFTER NOON!"

MAN CAN DO

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY

PRIVATE WITT was pushing a lazy broom over the boundless acreage of the big hangar's concrete floor. All ships were in the air. The macs were all out on the deadline. And there was nothing to stand in the way of the private's progress. Still and all, no new sweeping records were being set up. As before said, she was sure one lazy broom. Then again, perhaps it was the private who lazed a bit.

But the private's vocal output was tip-top; and absolutely regulation. He was wailing, lustily, that age-old lament of the damned, to wit: "You're in the army now! You're not behind the plow! Ya'll never get rich!" And so forth.

"Damned if ya ain't in the army now," said a voice at Witt's elbow. The speaker was Sergeant Fleet, in charge of that particular training hangar. He was quitting the hangar, some official-looking papers in hand, headquarters-bound, perhaps. But he stopped to swap a bit of gab and guff with the private. "How does she look, private," Fleet asked. "Think ya'll finish this floor?"

"Easy," answered Private Witt, with full confidence. He added, without missing a single slow stroke, "Hell, serg, I've got almost a full year left on this enlistment. Sure I'll finish this here sweep of tough acreage that Uncle Sam enticed me to homestead."

Then, having made that promise, Private Witt quit the very slow action. He leaned expertly on the long handle and gazed afield to where a student was bouncing a ship to a rough landing. With a new and more thoughtful mood crowding him, the private made known:

"And the old uncle with the striped pants and long whiskers sure did give old man Witt's dumb offspring one first-rate, royal Dutch-rubbing. Yes, sir, what I mean, they must have thought I had a 'half' attached to my last name. There was garbage to be collected, kitchen police to be done, guard to be stood, roads to be built and ditches to be dug, so that's why Private Witt was born."

Sergeant Fleet riffled the official-looking papers, more or less at a loss to know just what was eating the boy.

"And what t'hell did you expect, private? Did you count on having the C. O. move over and make room for your heels on the same desk?"

"Not me," said Private Witt. "That's not the idea, serg. But the recruiting sergeant that seduced me promised that I'd get to fly."

"O-h-h-h!" the sergeant oh-ed. "That's the beef, eh?"

"That's it. What's more, I've got more than two years put down and I've never been off the ground. There's no justice there."

"Well," said Sergeant Fleet, "why don't you get smart like the rest of the macs and mooch yourself some flying time? Hell, soldier, I've known bright boys who stole enough unofficial time to make regular pilots of themselves. What man has done, man can—"

"Sez you, serg," said the private. "When and where do I get a chance to put the bee on any of these flying gents? I'm on strong-back detail most of the time; and when I'm out here in the hangar, this broom is the only thing I fly."

Sergeant Fleet, riffling his papers again, recalled that he was headed for headquarters. After all, none of Fleet's business are the promises of Uncle Sam and his recruiting sergeants.

"Anyway, private," said Fleet in going, "you'd best shake a leg and keep ahead of that sun line—" Fleet indicated the sharp line on the floor of the hangar, the line where said bright sun was pushing back the interior's cool shade —"or you'll be working up a sweat."

Private Witt gazed at the crawling line, grinned, went back to his slow broom-pushing task, and said:

"That's my speed, serg, for the rest of this hitch. I'm sore."

When Sergeant Fleet had passed from view, Private Witt once more stopped to stand, lean and study the wabbling technique of a poorly executed take-off, far afield.

"Not enough gun," said Witt to Witt. "Too much rudder. Then the guy tried to lift her off before he had flying speed. All wrong."

Again Private Witt plied the broom. Then his gaze fell upon the fuselage of an "in work" plane that Sergeant Fleet had, only that morning, pulled in against his long workbench. There were no wings on the ship; but the tail service was attached, complete. This, for want of a ship in air, was the sort of thing that Private Witt had been flying for more than two years. So he again sized up the approaches to the hangar, found himself all alone, then moved toward the fuselage.

He climbed aboard. Now the stick was in his right mitt. His left was on the dead throttle. His feet were on the rudder bar. His whole attention was on his hangar flying. And believe it or not, Private Witt was in the air. You can't keep a good man down.

Head down in the cockpit, flying blind, Private Witt next came back to this tough world of garbage details, guard mounts and brooms when Sergeant Fleet shoved his nose over the fuselage's gunnel and barked:

"Set 'er down, boy! Set 'er down! Boy, you can sure fly 'em ragged. And I thought you said the broom was all you got to fly around here. Soldier, you've got more inside hours of hangar flying than most of the pee-lots can show in their log books. Say, there's just a chance that you've been cheating, too. You got any hours in the other hangars, eh?"

Private Witt had pulled back his throttle, upon landing and rolling up to the line. He now reached ahead, cut his switch, shoved back his imaginary goggles, wrung the motor roar from his ears and grinned.

"Lots of 'em," he said. "Sergeant Pace, down at Headquarters hangar, is my monitor. I get to fly all those swell jobs down there. Sergeant Pace is going to turn me loose on the C. O.'s private

pursuit job next time I get to sweep that acre. And here's something else: Corporal Kelly, down at E Flight, lets me rev the motors when he's testing engines out on the line. You'd be surprised to see how I handle them. Tell you what, I know every dial, gauge, gadget and what's-it on the instrument board. I'm not kidding you, serg—I'm there. Boy! do I fly 'em!"

"Well, I'll be a so-and-so!" exclaimed the sergeant. "And to think that I thought that you thought that you were just a broom around here. And ya're a pee-lot, eh? All set to solo, that is, a ship, not a broom?"

"Not quite," Private Witt admitted, slowly. "The landings still have me stopped. Tell you the truth, I'm afraid of 'em; a guy hears so much about that being the hardest part of flying."

"Right," Sergeant Fleet agreed. "Anybody can start a thing; but knowing how to stop is the big end of the detail. What is it you want to know about the set-down? 'S funny Pace didn't show ya that. I showed Pace how to fly. That was in France, at Issoudun, during the late *guerre*. And listen, private. Us non-coms got our air work over there just the way ya're trying to get yours now. But we guys stole ships after we turned ourselves loose at the hangar flying. That's why I'm for you. But don't you go glomming ships here at this field. Now on ya landings, get this: throttle her low, come in on your glide—don't fly her in on power—and level her off and feel for your ground. But—and this is the big thing—look ahead to your horizon, not down over your wheels, when you're feeling. Ahead to the horizon, don't forget that."

"That's the thing I didn't know," said the private. "It's funny Sergeant Pace never told me that."

" 'Snot so funny," said Sergeant Fleet. "I never could show Pace how to set 'er down. That bird overshot his first solo landing, at Field 3, Issoudun, bounced over a row of barracks, then piled her up between the camp graveyard and the salvage depot. It was a stolen ship, too. And what did he do? Just told the salvage gang that he had orders to deliver that ship, to them, as was. That same day Pace's outfit pulled out of Issoudun; and he bootstrapped his way out of that hell of a mess. Brother, them there ain't horseshoes. It's a gift. But don't you go trying to pull any of that fast stuff here, Private. Just remember your horizon. Practice it, think it over, and tuck it away where you won't forget it—like a broom. And say—how about a bit of push-push? Look where your sun line is now. And you with part of your last year down, too. But listen, private—I'm going to see to it that you get a hop. No reason at all why a boy in Air Corps should do two years during peacetimes and never get off the ground."

IT SEEMS that Fate and a sick-list flying captain were working hand in mitt toward the fulfillment of Sergeant Fleet's just-made promise. If fate really had any part in the doings, it was she who caused one of the training planes to taxi up to the deadline just as the sergeant turned from the flying private in the wingless ship. And before Sergeant Fleet had reached his small office, Corporal Ott popped in from the deadline to report that ship No. 6—the craft just taxied in—was through for the afternoon. This owing to the fact that Lieutenant Page, one of the field's instructors, had managed to wash out his alloted work in jig time.

"No. 6," added Corporal Ott, "is in jake condition. What say I fill her tank, wipe her off and roll said bus in for the day?"

"No. Better hold her on the line," Sergeant Fleet told Ott. "The ace in the hole—" hooking his thumb over his

shoulder toward where Witt was still flying— "is going to finish this sweeping job just as soon as he knocks down another enemy ship. No use getting No. 6 all dusty. That is, in case there's any great amount of dust knocked off said floor when said ace starts pushing. Say, corporal, don't they put the high-yeller finish on these new-army goldbricks, eh? This kid Witt flys 'em ragged by the hour, in more than a few hangars on this line, and kicks like hell because Uncle Sam and a recruiting sergeant made a promise and failed to deliver."

"That's a shame," said Ott. "They made the same promise to me. But this kid, or any other john on the field, can have my share of the flying. What I mean, serg—it's a man's job. I'm not kidding. You never know when the bloody game is going to sneak up on you. Tell you what, I've changed my mind about the flashy thrill of wearing chest wings. Uh-huh! Not me. Them nice silver chest wings just break a boy in for real, permanent, form-fitting shoulder wings. Got the mate to that cig that you're burning under a No Smoking sign?"

Sergeant Fleet, about to reach for his pack of readymades, said, "Nix, corporal!" palmed his own smoke, and warned: "Not now. Here comes Captain Cannon. Hell, feller, I'm glad to see him back on the post."

So that's where the sick-list captain strolled in to join old-girl Fate in the fulfillment of the day's doings—and, too, in the making-good of Fleet's promise to put Private Witt on the wing.

"How're you, sergeant?" said Captain Cannon. "And you, corporal? Been getting along okey and running this post jake without me?"

"Not too well, sir," said Fleet. "How does it feel to be back and all set to rise and fly, sir?"

"Swell to be back," said the captain. "As for the flying—no can tell, Sergeant." Captain Cannon lowered his voice, seemed a bit gray, and added: "No use kidding myself, sergeant, it's Old Age getting in his dirty work. Do you realize that I'm crowding fifty? That's nothing short of downright ancientry in this air branch. As for this last crash, and these wabbly pins, they're not half the story. I'm afraid of this in here, sergeant."

The captain jabbed his left breast with a thumb.

"The old ticker just can't take it when a man begin to pile years on his back. Then again, you'll recall that I stood on a Spad's rudder bar, looking right at the ground, through nearly six thousand feet of fall through a German sky, and with no less than three enemy ships on my tail. That's the stuff, sergeant, that gets a man with its long-time time fuse. Hell! you can't have your heart in your mouth for six thousand feet without suffering after effects. You appreciate that at night when you sit up with a start. You realize that something's shot to hell when the least little unexpected happening sets the old ticker to pounding. Guess I've been on borrowed time too long, sergeant."

"Hell, sir, you'll live to lead formations and scatter flowers a few miles from the graves of young squirts that ain't cut their pin feathers yet," Fleet promised.

Captain Cannon studied a stunting plane for a full minute in rapt silence. That was the stuff to break him down—that thing of another pilot having all the fun of kicking one around. When it came to that line of work, Cannon took seconds from no man in air. Which, perhaps, was one good reason why the "old ticker" was beginning to yell "Uncle!" at forty-some-odd years. Stunting—stunting as is stunting, that is—teams a man up with the Grim Reaper in more ways than one. But a stunting plane calls and calls and calls.

Captain Cannon fell.

"Listen, sergeant," he said. "It's this

way: I just came in an hour ago. As yet, I haven't been returned to flying status, officially. Fact is, I don't intend to give the post's flying surgeon a peek at me until I'm sure of myself. But I'd like to sneak in a few unofficial hops on the side. What about this No. 6 on the line—is she all set to do it?"

"She sure is, sir!" Sergeant Fleet answered.

"Except for fuel," put in Corporal Ott. "We're waiting for the gas truck now. I'll put the prod on the driver, sir, and get her filled toot sweet."

"How much fuel has she?" the captain asked.

"Enough for about twenty minutes, sir," answered Ott.

"M'gosh, corporal," said the captain, "that's more than enough. I just want to make a few turns of the field. I'll take the responsibility of sending a ship aloft with its tank only partly filled. How about a 'chute, helmet and goggles, sergeant?"

"Coming up, sir," answered Fleet. He added: "And you can turn that ship around, corporal, and give her prop a throw. Get her all set for the captain. Coming right up, sir."

As Sergeant Fleet swung on his heels he half tripped on a slow moving broom that had been caressing the floor just behind him during the last few minutes of the conversation just closed. Fleet, in dancing clear of the slow broom, now faced Private Witt; and there was a heart-rending appeal in the boy's eyes. Those mellow, calf-like eyes seemed to say:

"Sergeant, kind sir, please ask the captain to give me that ride you just promised me?"

Captain Cannon had turned to stroll across the cement apron in the direction of the waiting ship. Sergeant Fleet overtook him.

"Just a moment, captain," the sergeant begged. "I've got a good mac in the hangar here who's never been off the ground. Can he fill the back pit on this hop?"

"You know he can," said the captain. "Fix him up with the 'chute and duds. It won't be much of a hop. Still and all, sergeant, if you and I remember aright, that first hop is a big hop no matter how brief it might be. Eh, what? Send him out."

"Come on," Sergeant Fleet said to Private Witt, as he made tracks toward the equipment locker in his office. "The captain says he'll take you up and shake your back teeth loose."

Private Witt was well nigh dumb—and more motionless than usual, even—with surprise and excitement. He just stood there with his broom, stared, then muttered: "You mean I get to ride with that ace? With Captain Cannon? You're kidding me, serg. Me ride with that—"

"Snap out of it, recruit," Fleet barked. "Come on. Get in here and back your butt into this 'chute pack. You're going up. What's tangling your feet, kid? I thought you was the he-hellingist flying man on this post. Let's see you show it."

A few minutes later Captain Cannon was sitting in the front pit of No. 6 with a very still, thrilled-stiff, wide-eyed private behind him. The captain, studying his instruments, was giving the power unit a final rev on the blocks. And at that precise moment, Sergeant Pace strolled up the line to join his old mate Fleet where that non-com stood to one side listening to the roll and dribble of a motor that was just right—and proving it.

"What's this—Cap Cannon home?" exclaimed Pace. "And is that my broom Witt in the rear pit? Say-y-y, Fleet, I showed that boy how to fly. For a fact, I wouldn't kid you, I've got him all set to turn loose."

"Sez you!" said Fleet. "I've heard geese quack before, soldier. You was go-

ing to turn him loose, eh? Well, why t'hell didn't you learn the kid how to set 'em down? I showed him that only ten-fifteen minutes ago. Now he's all set. Thanks to me."

"P-h-f-f-f-!" said Pace. "But what about the kid's ear muffs? How's the captain going to instruct him?"

"No instructions this hop," said Fleet. "The bus only has about twenty-minutes' gas; and—"

"Hell," barked Pace, "twenty-minutes is enough to solo a Pace-trained student. Wait till I speak to the captain."

Sergeant Pace quit Fleet, strode to the ship's side, tapped Captain Cannon on the shoulder and saluted, and at the same time motioned the superior to throttle his power in order that they might talk. Then they did—talk. And the captain nodded. Then Pace moved back and had a few words with young Witt. Sergeant Fleet and the crew-men watched Pace adjusting the instruction earmuffs to Witt's head. The phone line used was the old one-way, instructor-to-student speaking tube. That is, the student could merely hear, but make no answers, nor ask any questions, in return. Captain Cannon, beginning to feel that he was back in the game again, turned and watched Pace.

As soon as the earmuffs were on, the captain shoved his mouthpiece overside, blasted a short jazz to his power and gave the new student full benefit of the engine's exhaust explosion. Young Witt jumped as though shot from a gun; and all hands roared. They were set.

"Now do your stuff, kid," Pace barked as a parting shot. "Don't forget—a free wrist, light feet on the bar. Watch where the horizon cuts the ship's nose when the captain levels off; and line your wings on that horizon. And don't hurry. Don't overcontrol. And if the captain don't say you're good when you land, I swear t'hell you'll massage concrete for the duration. Okey, captain!"

AT THE far, down-wind end of the take-off strip, Captain Cannon swung into the breeze. He throttled low and studied his sky. Then he held to the ground while three landing ships glided in.

"Geeze," murmured the watching Pace. "I never guessed that you and me'd see the day when the cap would be so cautious, Fleet. This last crash musta been very bad joss, eh?"

"The cap's a sick man, Pace," Sergeant Fleet said. "Keep this under your hat: the cap's afraid that the old ticker's running down on him. He just told me so. Well, there he goes. And it's the same old pep. Same old take-off. And m'gosh—he's going to pull a bit of a zoom. Oh-ho! up she goes. Hell! same old cap!"

"I don't know about the cap's heart," said Pace; "but I'll bet my student's heart was in his mouth before that old bus reached the top."

"Yeah, and I'll bet it had a fuzzy taste," said Fleet.

Topping that cadet-like zoom with major-like caution, the captain carried on, and up, in a regular training field climb; and, therefore, refrained from making his first turn till fully three hundred feet of altitude was under him. Then, still climbing, No. 6 came north along the far side of the field. Other ships in the air were given a wide berth: the captain evidently holding no desire to have truck with any of those wild cadets who darted here and there in the sky. Soon a thousand feet was under the ship.

Then, at about fifteen hundred, No. 6 leveled out and the captain throttled her down to cruising speed. For a half minute he held her there, checking his few instruments and studying the surrounding sky. Then he removed his left hand from the throttle, took up the speaking-tube's mouthpiece and said:

"You fly her, private. She's yours."

The captain shoved both hands above his shoulders—still riding the rudder bar

lightly with his feet—and Private Witt put a palsied right mitt on the stick. She was his! The captain—Witt found a strange, dumbfounding attraction in those hands held aloft—was off the controls. Hell's bells! he—Broom Witt, none other!—was flying this ship!

What a moment!

You and you and you—as they say over the radio—can have the world and its riches, the world and its fame, the world and its *femmes,* but a squirt in Witt's place wouldn't swap you for a dozen worlds. Good Lord! A ship in his hands! A ship—

"Watch your nose! Get it down. Up with that right wing. Easy. Easy. That's it. Good."

That was the captain's voice in Private Witt's ears.

And now, with the palsy gone, the private was really on the job. It was his chance; and he knew it. He'd make good, or else—

"Up with that nose, private. Watch your motor speed. Up, up. Good. Fine. Nice handling. Now try a turn. Easy, easy. No hurry. You're skidding, too much rudder. That's better. Hold it. Now straighten out. Not bad at all."

And that went on for a full ten minutes. Ten minutes of air work is a long time. That is, for a beginner. And Captain Cannon must have thought the same thing, for he shook for the stick, saying:

"I'll take her now, private. You did fine. Our fuel is low, though, and we'll have to be getting back. Take a look at your safety-belt. I'll do a little dive and a split-S turn on the way down. Hold everything, private!"

Captain Cannon eased a bit more power to the ship, dropped its nose, and let the ground come up a bit. Then, when the bus was tight in the run, he pulled back on the stick, shot full gun to her, brought the nose right up, and—and Captain Cannon's once-stout flying heart missed a row of shots! There, when his zoom gave vision overhead, was another plane; and it was hardly a hundred feet above.

Where misplaced planes, such as that other ship, ever come from, a pilot never knows. They just happen. And they happen, at one time or another, in the life of every flying man. It's plain hell, too.

Some way or another, the captain fought clear of that crash in mid air; and the second ship, seeing nothing, carried on as though this were one swell afternoon for sleepwalking or blind flying.

Captain Cannon redressed his ship's flight. He even took care to put her into a steady climb, setting his throttle at the right advance. Then he groped for the speaking tube, and said:

"Listen, private. Now keep cool. Use the old head. I don't feel just right. I'm—I'm going under, private. Climb her—this way—to two thousand—or better—then—parachute."

At first, Private Witt didn't quite grasp the detail that had been handed him. But he again reached for the stick and rudder bar, thinking that a little more instruction was coming his way. Then he sort of wised up to the fact that the captain had slumped a bit. And the first chill of panic moved into the rear pit with the private.

Panic? Panic be damned! Panic's only for women, children, fat politicians and big, busy business men. Private Witt booted panic to hell and gone outa that rear pit. Now—and no fooling—he was flying. And as for going to two or three thousand, there to quit the ship and the captain—where did the captain get that idea? Flying men don't quit flying men.

But that twenty-minute gas supply—how about that? M'gosh, that twenty minutes must be nearly up. That being the case, Private Witt must do something about this mess, and now. Mess is right! What a mess he'd have on his hands if that old prop should quit, out of fuel,

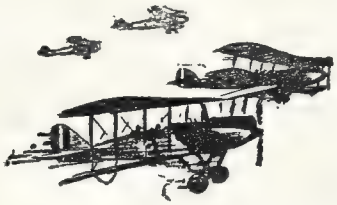
and leave him with a dead-stick landing as his only choice. That would be just a little too much. Dead-stick setdowns are advance stuff; and not for beginners. Witt knew that, too. So the kid gathered that ship into his lap, stiffened the old upper lip, tightened up on the rest of the fittings, and flew her. And how he flew her!

They'll tell you it was expert. They tell aright. He went down wind on a steady altitude-losing glide. And he kept his motor warm and turning. Then, a mile from the field's east fence, he brought No. 6 around with her nose pointed into the breeze, headed for home. But the boy was plenty high, far too high, when that east fence came under. He was sure going to overshoot the landing space; for the art of sideslipping or fishtailing is also advance work. But with Panic booted out, Private Witt held to his chosen glide, come hell and high water. And he looked overside, watching that home field running out behind him. Still no panic. Then the west fence passed under, with the bus still in the air. There was a plowed field dead ahead. And its furrows were crosswise to Private Witt's direction. That was bad. Off to the right there was the state highway that skirted and passed the north side of the field. Witt used his head again, also a bit of rudder, and he picked that highway for a landing.

Oh, it wasn't the smoothest landing ever made. It wasn't a job of work for an expert to boast about. Truth is, the kid broke the tailskid and wrung off both wheels before the bus stopped bouncing and rolling. However, any airman will tell you that a landing is anything out of which a pilot is able to walk, under his own power. Private Witt was able to do that, and more. He was carrying Captain Cannon cross field, headed for the post hospital, when the field-service truck whirled out to meet him.

That was all; and, you'll admit, quite an afternoon's job for a young fellow who'd never before soloed anything but a broom.

Then again, that wasn't all. Captain Cannon was able to sit up and take notice before the week was out. He told the C. O. that one old flyer was just about set to fold his wild wings, so wasn't it a good idea to replace the old with a new one? A real good new one. One who could land a ship on his first try. It was, said the C. O. So Cadet Witt, from that week on, flew from Sergeant Fleet's hangar, the hangar that was *almost* broomed by Private Witt.



JUST A BUSH LEAGUER

BY BERTON BRALEY

POOR old Ulysses
Thought he was a rover,
Thought that he had wandered
The wide world over;
(It was just a little world,
And I can show where
He hadn't seen nuthin'
Hadn't been nowhere!)

Poor old Ulysses
Trampin' here and there,
Never under water
And never in the air,
Just trudged round
On the same old level,
Just an old bum
Who lied like the devil.

Poor old Ulysses
Traveled half his life
Before he got home
To his patient wife,
Had to have a story
To tell Penelope,
And that's the reason
For the Oddyssee!

Poor old Ulysses
Didn't travel far,
Why, *I've* been further
In my cheap tin car!
He was a slow-poke
And I can show where
He hadn't seen nuthin'
Hadn't been nowhere!

THE CAMP-FIRE

The meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers.

A NEW face at the Camp-Fire is that of Alfred Batson, who joins the writer's Brigade in this issue with "Stunt Man." He introduces himself in the following sketchy autobiography, which indicates the width of his travel and activities.

I always considered the first thrill of my life an episode which happened many years ago when as a small boy I was taken to church by my mother. We arrived late and as the church was crowded were shown to a pew occupied only by an imposing, middle aged man whose large nose held me spellbound. He found hymns for my mother; he did not mind my dusty shoes on his impeccable morning attire; he was the soul of courtesy and more worshippers watched the scene than gave attention to the sermon. Time came for the offering, and he left us to go about his duties. When passing our pew with a filled plate he slipped, fell, and the money rolled in every direction. The least disturbed person in the entire congregation, he scrambled down to retrieve it. I gave off a shriek of delight before being muffled. On leaving the church my mother told me his name. I like to recall his kindness to a small boy.

How many *Adventure* readers have seen J. P. Morgan on his knees picking up coins?

At 15, I commenced an apprenticeship in life with the Canadian Army, at 20, Wall Street, then newspaper work and the other side of the picture as a sand-hog on the Hudson River Vehicular Tunnel. The "bends" cut short that career. Shortly after, the plight of a man named Sacasa, the sight of a quiet little boat, unobtrusive and suspiciously deserted, lured me to the land of mañana and a man named Sandino helped unload our cargo on a moonlit beach. The life of a wandering soldier of fortune with its mud, squalor, infrequent meals, stripped the curtain from the glamor so vividly described from the arm chair security of Richard Harding Davis' steam-heated flat. (Oh I know, he got around, but always with a boiled shirt handy.)

But more probably my exodus from those parts was due to a steely-eyed, square-jawed Colonel of American Marines who thumped the table and bellowed, "Beat it." I did—overland with $1.88 in the kick at the start and no place to spend it. Tela, San Pedro Sula, Puerto Cortez, Puerto Barrios, then bad feet and eventually Guatemala City. Some articles for a newspaper and I had the first decent meal in weeks, shed my beard, watched the art of Luis Freg at the bull-ring. Overland again, Antigua, Escuintla, then north to the Mexican border at Ayutla, and Paddy Flynn, king of Tropical Tramps. Machine guns broke up the wading of that river, but two miles up the bank we made it. Then the long, long, Theuantepec desert, bandits who proved to be the finest guys on the whole trip, San Geronimo, Puebla, Mexico City. Out again to the Hill of the Bells, eventually Monterey and Neuvo Laredo—three borders crossed sans passport, nine months afoot. Out

of it all came a book, "Vagabond's Paradise," which gives the answer.

Six months of writing advertising for a permanent wave outfit, then hitch-hiking to Frisco, an ordinary on a Dollar Boat and a jump at Shanghai. Newspaper work again for three long, happy years, through the Gorges and fired on by pirates, up the Tsin-Pu to write the withdrawal of the Japanese from Tsinanfu, pictures from a window in Stein's hotel. A Jap Colonel, two days in a guard house, wires to the British Minister, and I was free. The Provisional Court and that warrant for Chiang Kai-shek for being "a notorious gentleman." T. V. Soong and the unprinted story of Sun Yat Sen's march from Canton to immortality and the "treasury" of the Republic of China a rattan suitcase swung from a saddle. The "Christian" General, Liau Si Amau (The Old Small Cat) most feared and successful of kidnappers, his execution and the way he sang "Onward Christian Soldiers" enroute to the Kiangsu Prison with me on the tailboard of the jail van. George Gilbert, blue-eyed chief of detectives, and the tales that could not be printed, the rivalry between the British and French Intelligence Bureaus with the U. S. a poor third and the Japs eating up misinformation and delighted to get it.

Back again to newspaper work in the U. S. and the writing of a story told by an ex-German spy in Shanghai, "African Intrigue," the longest jungle trek in history. Florida after that.

Life is good. *Maskee—quien sabe!*

—ALFRED BATSON.

AN ENGLISH reader, Harry J. Johnson of Leeds, who has been a foremost promoter of swimming in that country—president of the English Swimming Association, starter at Olympic Games, etc.—pays tribute to the healthful work of the C. C. C. in the Rockies.

I have recently had a very long tour in the Western States and Canada, in the process of which I have crossed the Rockies seven times, five times out of the seven being above the snow line. I was particularly impressed in all the public parks where I stayed with the fine work which is being done by the C.C.C. One of my most vivid memories being the picture of four truck loads of shining happy youths on their way to put a fire out outside St. Mary's Lake in the Glacier National Park. I pay this tribute to the work which is being done, because, unfortunately, here in England we are wasting our youth, who are not learning a trade and who as far as one can see, do nothing but lounge at street corners and smoke cigarettes. To be perfectly fair, however, the great difficulty in comparison is that you have a large outdoor country and a class of youth who revel in outdoor sport. May the good work prosper. I am sorry for the cause that has brought this about, namely unemployment, but that will pass.

Let me say how much I have enjoyed *Adventure*. I have been a subscriber to it for nearly 20 years.

RECENTLY in *Ask Adventure* appeared a request for methods of locating a bee tree. M. J. McGill of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, tells us how he used to do it. It reminds me of an editor's adventures with a couple of million bees.

A method of locating bee trees, used by myself and a companion some twenty years ago in the Berkshire Hills, is as follows:

Build a small box about 4 inches square having a slide about half way down that can be pulled out or pushed in from the outside. The top of the box is left open and a square of glass carried in the pocket which may be used to cover the box. The bait is placed in the bottom of the box (a piece of dried bread soaked in syrup or, better yet, a burnt corncob soaked in any syrup to attract bees—sugar and water, molasses and water, anise seed, etc.). This is carried in the lower half of the box with the slide pushed in. With the box in one hand, the square of glass in the other, find a honey bee "working" on a blossom. He can easily be trapped in the top half of the box with the glass held covering it. Place the box, with the bee in it, on a rock or fence post and pull out slide making one compartment of the box. Now sit down for a few minutes until the bee quiets down. He will be quite wild at first but after a time will be attracted by the bait and will start working on it. When he is calm enough, uncover the box, then watch carefully when he comes out. After circling around a bit he will make a line for the tree. With watch in hand time him until he returns. We worked on a basis of 20 minutes elapsed time meant the tree was one mile or so distant. Other bees usually return with the first and often many will be coming and going until the "line" is easily established and with a fair degree of accuracy. You now have the direction of the tree from a given spot and approximate distance.

To make more certain, establish a cross line from another spot, timing flight of bees in same manner as the first. Then look for tree—generally not far from water or swamp, in soft wood or partly decayed trees, stumps, etc., near where lines cross. On quiet days they may be heard if you are near the tree.

The editor heard of a bee tree near his home in New Jersey. He stood in some bushes and observed the tree. There

was a pleasant hum of industry. The bees came in and went out.

He decided to get those bees. But the tree was too large to cut down, and even had it been smaller, he had doubts of what the bees would do while he was swinging an axe.

It was a baffling problem, so he got a book. There was a chapter on the anatomy of a bee's hypodermic, the analysis and toxicity of the poison. There was another chapter on poultices to be applied to the point of impact. It was all good reading.

But there was mention of a clever gadget called a bee-escape. It is a small thing on the principle of a subway entrance. The bee goes down a hole and confronts an exit partly barred by a very light flat spring. The bee can push this spring aside enough to squeeze through, particularly if another bee right behind it gives a push. But there's no way to come back—the spring won't open from that direction.

He got one of the things, and this was no easy matter, as you will discover if you go around to the stores you know and ask if they keep bee-escapes in stock.

He fitted the gadget into a hole in a wire-covered box. All he had to do then was to fit it against the hole in the tree after dark, when the bees were inside the tree, let them all come through the bee-escape in the morning, and then carry the box away. Certainly it was a neat and simple plan.

He fitted the box against the tree, but the tree was rotten and the bark very rough and full of chinks, the bees' door was large, and there were a number of woodpecker holes and worm holes also. He had found an old skirt in his garage. He caulked that around the box as well as could be done in quick order, because now a humming noise was swelling in the tree until it sounded like a battery of electric fans.

As he approached the spot the next morning, he was astounded to see a great many bees in the air. They were particularly thick around the box—in fact, only when they shifted formations could he see the box at all. He walked to the tree, or almost, very slowly. And now they were all around him, and he was wearing some branches and trying to look like a tree himself.

He discovered that if a bee lights on your ear, and you do not move or waggle that ear, the bee eventually goes away, although it takes its time about leaving. If six bees light on your ear, the advice is all the more urgent.

The bees, or some of them, were coming into the box, but also they have found a number of other exits, and the other exits were becoming more popular by the second.

He took hold of the box—with gloved hands—very gently, and pulled it from the tree. The morning's traffic burst out behind it. This was one of the worst moments in history, and there is no use in trying to put it into words.

He got out of there at a fast editorial clip, took the box full of rattlesnakes to his backyard, pried open an end, and put it into a box the bees were supposed to adopt as a hive. But strangely enough, there were no bees in that box the next day—they had apparently all gone back to their tree.

And still more strangely, there were no stings, though this fact passes all understanding.

At last report, in the early fall, the bees went in and the bees came out of that tree. The skirt still hangs there.

TALBOT MUNDY came in from Florida to talk things over. He has laid out a new series of historical yarns—Antony and Cleopatra this time—and is now beginning to write them.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

A RAINBOW bridge that isn't a will of the wisp—and you go via Gallup and Chin Lee.

Request:—I would appreciate information regarding the "Rainbow Bridge" in Southeastern Utah.

What is: 1. The closest town or civilization as an outfitting post or starting point? 2. The distance from this place to the bridge? 3. Type of country to be crossed in getting there? 4. The approximate time on horseback? 5. Does the entire supply of water have to be carried? 6. Any general information regarding the bridges or the trip there.

—GARRY GROVER, Socorro, N. M.

Reply by Mr. Gordon Gordon:—There are two routes to Rainbow Bridge and for grandeur of scenery and prehistorical interest, I would hate to make the choice for you. But since you are interested in Cañon de Chelly, I'd suggest you go from Gallup to Chin Lee, the colorful Navajo Indian trading post and gateway to the Cañon.

Here brown sandstone rises in sheer walls to a height of 1,500 feet and prehistoric and present-day Indian dwellings nestle in their shelter. The sight rivals the Grand Canyon for massive precipices.

Roughly, it is about seventy-five miles from Gallup to Chin Lee, and fifty-five on to Kayenta where any equipment necessary for the ninety-mile three-day horseback trip to the Bridge can be obtained. Monument valley, a vast maze of monoliths hundreds of feet high, is about twenty-five miles on the road north of Kayenta.

The other route is farther in actual mileage but requires less time to make. Continuing on the Gallup highway (U. S. 66), you turn off on U. S. 89 six miles east of Flagstaff. A good dirt road takes you to Cameron where you will find an excellent hotel and camping cottages, a suspension bridge 650 feet above the Little Colorado, a painted desert and dinosaur tracks (that is, you'll find the latter if you look long enough. It took me two hours). At Tuba City, seventy-six miles from Flagstaff, you leave civilization behind and go twenty-five miles through pure sand to Red Lake where there are camping accommodations. It is over sixty miles from there to Rainbow Lodge, the end of the road. Here you can also get meals, spend the night and equip yourself with horses and supplies for the trip to the arch which is less than a day's ride.

It is always best when driving in this part of the country (I assume you plan to go by car) to carry a good-sized canteen for extra water and extra gasoline. The roads are very sandy in places, and you are probably familiar with the trick arroyos have of blocking or washing out roads after rains. The roads above mentioned are rather infrequented and there are almost no houses between the scattered towns. You can get water at the towns mentioned and there is no need to carry any on either horseback or car trip, except in case you are delayed for some reason.

The country is rugged and beautiful in its grandeur. The stratified colorings of buttes and mesas suggest the Grand Canyon. Powdered in some areas, these formations appear in many "painted deserts". Sometimes the trail to the Bridge is over pure rock, one famous part of it leading over a bald dome with a faint trail hacked in the slick rock to keep the horses from slipping. At Redbud pass the trail goes between red perpendicular sandstone cliffs a thousand feet high and so close

you can stretch out your arms and touch both walls at once.

The arch, over 300 feet in height with a span of 274 feet, stands out even in the towering cliffs of its setting. It is the biggest natural arch in the world and spans a desert stream. It is of slick red sandstone with no vegetation on it.

If you are interested in ancient cliff dwellings, you should take short side trips and visit some of the many in the region. One, called Inscription House, is covered with writing, supposedly by Spaniards on one of their explorations.

I am so fascinated with this spot of the country, it has been quite impossible for me to keep this information in the conventional bounds of a letter. I certainly hope you have a grand trip.

YOU wind up, give it a twist and get a curved ball—and a winning one.

Request:—I would like to know how to throw the different curve balls and floaters and how to develop a good speed ball.

—F. H. CHAMBERS, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Reply by Mr. Frederick G. Lieb:—There are various ways of throwing curve balls. The accepted one, or the one most used, is to grip the ball with index and middle fingers on top and thumb at bottom. As you wind up, you make the ball break in or out by a sharp wrist snap just as you release the ball, snapping the ball to the left or right as you wish to make the ball curve away or into the batsman. So called "floaters" are pitched with variations of this wrist snap, the wrist may be snapped downward as ball is released for a floater which drops. Be careful in practicing new forms of deliveries, so you do not put an over-strain on the arm.

I know of no way to develop a good, fast ball but by practice. However, except in rare cases, pitchers with real, good, fast balls must either be big and strong, or at least wiry, with a whip-lash arm like Grove and "Dizzy" Dean. The arm whips down, and then with the proper and rhythmic body follows through, such pitchers are able to "pour" in their fast ball.

THE deadly Derringers were popular in the Golden West—they could be concealed easily.

Request:—When and by whom were Derringers first made? Could you give me an outline of the history and present value of this quaint type of revolver? Can you recommend a good book or pamphlet about the care, repair and history of old firearms? How can one get rust off an old gun when former attempts with kerosene, steel wool, and like methods, have failed?

—HENRY C. BOLDNICK, Lebanon, Ky.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The celebrated Derringer was the firearm made by Henry Derringer, a Philadelphia, Pa., gunsmith, and stated by Saterlee to have been first made about 1826. Both pistols and military muskets were made. I believe the first were flintlock, but am not positive of this. The pistol that made him famous was a percussion lock, of course.

They were generally of large bore, handmade, and with fine locks, and usually in a nice case with bulletmould, loading flask, and possibly a screwdriver, and oil bottle as well. Sometimes extra, longer barrels were also included in especially expensive sets, such as the ones owned by General Magruder, C.S.A.

They were generally carried in vest or fob pockets, and were favorites with gamblers, due to ease of concealment. Short range arms, they were deadly, because of their large ball. Some were made for Curry, of San Francisco, and stamped with his name and address. He was a noted arms dealer in Gold Rush days there.

Cartridge Derringers were made after the adoption of metallic ammunition, and even a few small revolvers of .22 and .32 rimfire calibers. Colt, Remington, and others also made small single shot and two shot pistols of .45 caliber, and called them Derringers.

I think Derringer made his own pistols about to 1868, the approximate time of his death. I cannot say as to the value of his pistols, and would recommend that you get in touch with the following dealer in the old arms—Mr. F. Theodore Dexter, 910 Jefferson St., Topeka, Kansas.

As to the care and repair of old arms, I can recollect nothing better than the work of Captain Dillin, "The Kentucky Rifle," price $4.50, from the following firm—The American Rifleman, Barr Bldg., Washington, D. C. This goes quite deeply into all matters connected with old American weapons, and is the most interesting (to me) of all my arms library.

I find the best method to remove rust from firearms, both old and modern, is to soak the rusted portion in Rem Solvent, a commercial firearms cleaning preparation for sale by all sporting goods dealers, and then rub carefully with fine steel wool. Incidently, Rem Solvent run around rusted screws will eventually loosen them, too, I find by experience.

A COLLECTION of medals entails a study of history, diplomacy, politics and court etiquette.

Request:—I recently obtained from the Pro-chancellor of the Order of the Crown of Prussia the statutes of this order. In part it says: "The Order is given only for the lifetime of the recipient and is to be returned after death." From this do I understand that

knighthood was only for the life of the recipient or was this dignity hereditary?

Further, in various catalogues and price lists I have noticed the badge of the Crown Order offered sometimes "with swords", sometimes without. No reference is made to this distinction in the statutes received. Was this a later feature or addition?

Regarding the Ernst August, Hannovarian Merit Medal (I believe also called the Service Medal for 1841): When and by whom was this authorized and for what service was it given.

—ROBERT T. SHAUT, Hollywood, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—Without actually knowing, I should say that any title or knighthood given with the Order of the Crown of Prussia was only for the recipient's lifetime. This is the general rule where the bestowal of a decoration carries with it a title. The creation of knights, barons, etc., is made independently of any of the existing orders, and then they are sometimes hereditary and sometimes only for the tenure of the one to whom it was given. I think most knighthoods in England are given only for a lifetime. It is only the higher orders that are handed down.

Where you see the same decoration offered with swords and without swords it means that one is for war service and the other is for civil merit. Those with swords are quite often of two or three kinds and in some cases the swords are arranged differently, such as when given for valor in the field or given for general good war work. The Austrians make even further distinctions such as those given to civilians in war times and those given to civilians in peace times.

The Ernst August Hannoverian Merit Medal comes in two classes, military and civil. The military one says on the reverse *Kriegerverdienst.* The civil one says *Verdienst ums vaterland.* These were instituted by Ernst August, who was the Duke of Cumberland, the fifth son of George III who inherited the Hannoverian throne because Victoria being a woman could not ascend this throne, and after about a century and a third the throne of Hannover was ruled by one not an English king. How this order of merit was instituted in 1841, I do not know. Hannover had no war at that time, but the King was a pompous autocratic fellow and wanted to confer some favor on those loyal to him because all during his reign he was having trouble with Parliament and many of his subjects.

AND the truth is not yet known. Figures of the World War roster, desertions and mutinees are as yet incomplete.

Request:—I have heard that the Russian Government sent 100,000 soldiers to France in 1916. Also that these men mutinied in 1917 and that the French executed 1,600 of them at one time. If so, kindly state how this was done and give date. Also under what command were these soldiers and what was done with them until the end of the war and after. Also if they gave any trouble in 1916 and if they were useful on the Western Front. Also kindly give number of losses from different causes from 1916 to Nov. 11, 1918 if you are able to do so.

I have heard it said that the German Army was unwilling to fight during the last weeks of the war. Kindly give dates and units that actually mutinied and the steps taken by the Government. How many soldiers were loyal until the Armistice? How many desertions were there during the last weeks of the war? I have never been able to really learn much of the above matters and have always been anxious to know the true facts.

Was there a strike of munition workers in Germany and did trouble start in the army at the same time?

—WILLIAM B. ELLIS, Cascade, Mont.

Reply by Mr. Beda Von Berchem:—Your order is a very large one and your first question particularly is about a subject of which very little is known. For two reasons: First, the Russian pre-revolutionary records either were destroyed in 1917 or are unavailable, and secondly, the French do not give out very much about the mutiny of the Russian troops that were sent to France. They had a mutiny in their own army in 1917 and, naturally like to point out now that this mutiny was instigated, partly at least, by the Russians. That was not the fact, however.

The Russians in France numbered about 50,000 men, were under the command of their own officers but saw no front line service to speak of. They did mutiny, that's a fact. But the exact date when the rebellion started and the reasons have been given by different military historians who differ in all accounts. No figures are available as to Russian losses in France, at least, no official ones.

Whoever told you that the German Army was unwilling to fight during the last weeks of war made sport of you. Ask any American veteran who served in France and he will tell you a different story. There were no mutinies in the German Army in the front lines, but some S. O. S. formations, early in November, when the news of the sailors' mutiny in Kiel reached them, refused to do their duty.

The reasons for the war weariness of the Germans are so manifold that I can't cover them in this letter. Lack of foodstuffs, disappointment over the failure of the 1918 offensive which was to end the war in Germany's favor, fear for the safety of their families and many other reasons had a lot to do with it. Besides, great numbers of the

soldiers who had served on the Russian front were already tinged with Bolshevik notions, especially with the idea of a universal brotherhood among the nations and these fellows distributed their wisdom among the men serving on the Western Front.

The Government took no steps whatsoever, because it was headed by Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor who, as the German historians now have it, sold out the Kaiser to the Socialists at home. But the military authorities did take steps, especially Ludendorff, who ordered several of the Bolshevik agitators executed. Those, as I said before, were members of the S. O. S., such as wagoners of the supply trains and the like.

The actual number of desertions will never become known. No front line soldiers could possibly desert on account of the presence of Field Gendarmes behind the line, who gathered all stragglers; but many men, who late in 1918 went home on leave, never returned to the front and such men, who can rightly be classed as deserters, were legion.

There were strikes of munition workers at many plants in 1918, but these strikes were caused by general dissatisfaction with the food shortage, the long working hours and also the fact that the military, in dire need of additional men at the front, combed the ranks of the male ammunition workers time and again and sent many to the front.

After the Kiel mutiny, these strikes became general and had, of course, something to do with the spreading of the general revolutionary spirit.

There is a great number of books about the above, mostly in German, but as I said, the subject is such an extensive one that I can only answer your question in a general way. To answer it in full is impossible.

Regarding your first question, I expect to have some real dope within the next six weeks and if you are still curious, write me again. Please remember that the subject of the World War is such a tremendous one and entails so much research work, that it would be physically impossible for me to go into many details.

THAIPUSAM—a Hindu festival of pain to relieve pain and atone for it.

Request:—For what god and with what ceremonies is the festival of Thaipusam observed?

—C. P. SMITH, Manette, Wash.

Reply by Mr. V. B. Windle:—When you ask of native customs practiced in Singapore you suggest a multitude of ceremonies from which it would be hard to pick and choose the most interesting of all. But Thaipusam, a Tamil Hindu Festival, seems to be possessed of more stark drama under pain and torture than some of the others and lucky indeed is the visitor who is in Singapore at the right time.

"Thaipusam" is a Tamil compound word composed of "Thai" and "Pusam," the former being the name of a month which comes between January and February, and the latter a star in the heavens.

This mythical month represents the time of the year that the sun comes into the Tropic of Cancer and the star "Pusam" appears on a full moon day. Thaipusam, therefore, falls on the first full moon after the sun has crossed the Tropic of Cancer.

The sick and the mad are believed by the Hindus to get better or worse during a full moon or on a new moon day and those great sages of Southern India, whose one great concern was to reach God, have declared this day a most important one for prayer and penance.

The diety of the day is Subramania, which means the Spotless Being or Truth Absolute Personified. He is the son of Siva the Supreme and Parvathi and is represented as having six heads and seated on a peacock which holds a serpent in its feet. His weapon is a spear, which in Tamil is called "Vale," and it is this word that devotees keep crying as they undergo the torturous penances demanded of them.

The serpent represents the sorrows and sufferings of man, due to sin, and the peacock, ever the enemy of the snake, represents the virtue to drive away sin and misery. The spear denotes the will power of man, the strength necessary to overcome adversity, the control of which leads to happiness and bliss.

During the year a Hindu may have fervently prayed for the recovery of an ill relative or friend and, his prayers being answered, he must go through the tortures of Thaipusam. Perhaps he has sinned and must do penance and his only escape from a Hindu Hell is the self-torture of this ceremony.

There are a great many tortures that they can inflict upon themselves. To see them do it is to realize how seriously they take the whole affair, how certain they are of the outcome, how devoted they are to these rituals that have come down to them through the centuries.

The tortures begin at one temple and end at another. Some five miles separates the two and the devotee must walk the entire distance, although friends and relatives stand along the way and are permitted to dash water upon him if he falters.

The burning of incense is sickening, the chants of the natives weird, and the throbbing of the temple drums is like the march of the dead.

Groups gather around the devotees. Sharp silver spears and hooks inflict pain which is not felt, so great is the mad joy of these believers. They bear their tortures unflinchingly.

The various ceremonies last three days. On the evening of the last day the great Silver Car, drawn by sacred bullocks, leaves its

temple to go down to the padang for the final event. It is real silver and ablaze with lights. Tamils crowd around it, chanting. They are wild and uncontrolled. They follow its course to the sea front.

The padang, or field along the sea front, bursts into light. Skyrockets of all descriptions flame against the night sky, challenging the moon. Firecrackers and small bombs burst on the ground. A display of fireworks that shames an old-fashioned Fourth of July.

A riot of color, of flame, and of smells!

MR. DAVIS QUINN sent in more important information about "duck disease." He writes:

I have a circular from the Biological Survey describing a new bulletin (T. B. 411 T). I quote it:—

"Recent investigations have removed the problem of duck sickness from the field of chemical toxicology to the realm of biology. The disease has been associated definitely with the toxin of a common saprophytic bacterium, *Clostridium botulinum*, type C, an organism best known in the United States as a frequent cause of limberneck in poultry and forage poisoning in livestock."

Facts presently at hand do not indicate that either the coyote or the crow is anywhere near as destructive to favorable forms of wild life as certain authorities would have us believe. Of course both these animals are well able to take care of themselves (unless poison is used) so there is no immediate concern over their possible extermination. But there is no question their present intensive persecution by man is the result of propaganda. In the case of the ducks, the real cause of whose decimation lies in overshooting and unsportsmanlike practices such as baiting and the use of live decoys, this propaganda operates as a most effective smoke screen. Directed against the crow, it is fostered by arms and ammunition makers and sells their products out of shooting season. Directed against the coyote, it has been fostered by the Biological survey and has been the means of obtaining huge appropriations (the last one a million dollars a year for ten years!) for poison operations, the most outrageous thing ever perpetrated against the wild life of this country in the history of conservation.

As a matter of fact, regarding the crow and wildfowl, W. C. Henderson, Associate Chief, Bureau of Biological Survey, U. S. Department of Agriculture, addressing a meeting of the International Association of Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners, Montreal, Sept. 10 and 11, 1934, stated that after an exhaustive study of the damage from crows on waterfowl nesting areas, the reports of W. H. Ransom (Alberta), E. A. Preble and L. J. Goldman (Athabaska River and Delta), C. M. Aldous (Manitoba), and L. R. Kalmbach (Saskatchewan), clearly set forth facts pointing straight to the conclusion that the destruction of wildfowl nests and eggs by crows (which subsist chiefly on insects!) positively does not constitute an important factor in wildfowl disappearance.

GREAT silent witnesses stand on Easter Island. Their secrets of origin, function and language are still unknown.

Request:—I am very much interested in the archaeological aspects of the monoliths of "Easter" Island, located at 27 degrees 8 minutes south latitude and 109 degrees 28 minutes west longitude.

I have not been able to find much information about these monoliths or the island itself, so I would be grateful for any information which you could supply me with concerning either of these matters.

I would also like any data which you could supply concerning any scientific (or otherwise) expeditions to this island.

—OVERTON F. KUHN, Sec. Grandview Archaeological Society, Columbus, Ohio.

Reply by Mr. W. McCreadie, Suva, Fiji:—In reply to your query on Easter Island, I expect you already know the basic facts, namely, that it lies some 2,000 miles from the Chilean coast, is 1,000 miles east from the Marquesas, in a great empty region of the Pacific. It is known as the mystery island of the Pacific. It is twelve miles long and five in width and is triangular in shape. Its circumference is thirty-four miles. It is of volcanic origin, having an extinct volcano at each corner of the triangle. It is leased to Messrs. Williamson and Balfour Co., C. A., of Valparaiso, and is visited once annually by a Chilean war vessels and an occasional trading vessel. The peak at the apex is Mount Rano Raraku, 1,700 feet high. There are no trees on the island, having apparently been destroyed by previous inhabitants, the present natives being few in number and light in complexion. The greater portion of the island is in terraces, especially on the eastern side. Ranged symmetrically on these were hundreds and thousands of carved statues or images and a kind of writing described as resembling the Egyptian glyphs. The terraces which are in cases 300 yards long and with an outward facing wall from eight to fourteen feet high, number about 200, and along the top of the wall equi-distant and facing inland were the images. The walls are built of great blocks of stone morticed and fitted together with great skill. The terraces apparently were the burial places for the dead and the statues, all of one pattern but varying in size, were the monuments. The statues were monstrous affairs. The tallest was thirty-three feet high

but the majority about twelve to twenty feet. They were carved out of the volcanic rock and represented the upper part of the human body. On their heads were crowns carved out of red volcanic stones.

Many of the images have been removed to museums. In the quarries at Mount Rano there remain many images in various stages of completion. There is one sixty-eight feet high. There are ancient roads leading from several quarries along which the images must have been dragged, how, no man can say. The strange glyph writing has not yet been solved. The only other glyphs found in the Pacific are on the Carolines and the Chathams and very recently the interesting glyphs found in a cave in the Yasawas Islands, Fiji, by Mr. Arthur J. Vogan and now accepted as ancient Chinese writing. There is also a mystery about the natives now on the island, they range from whitish to nearly black and from Melanesian to Polynesian. There is evidence that the original natives who were probably associated with the carvings were either exterminated or absorbed. The natives now speak the same language as those of the Cook group, but how they ever reached Easter remains a mystery.

Kind wishes and hope that some of your members may yet solve the mysteries of Easter Island and its giant but silent witnesses to a wonderful civilization now buried in the Pacific.

MR. ROBERT FROTHINGHAM writes:

Herewith a few queries from our readers which I have been unable to answer. With some of them I am familiar but there being no way of tracing them, it might be a good thing to turn 'em loose among our song fans. If they will forward the stuff to me, I'll be glad to pass it along to the original inquirer.

"Honting Ze Skonk Pole Cat"—a Canuck habitant dialect bit after the style of the late William H. Drummond.

"My best pal"—containing the refrain: "I'm the best pal I ever had—I like to be with me."

"The Kid's Last Fight," with the line: " 'Twas a cold winter night, Not a star was in sight."

"The Gunner of Galway."

"She sleeps beside the Suanee River, where the orange blossoms grow."

"Oh Wing Tu Fang was a Chinaman bold—He sailed up the Yangtse River—" a popular ditty during the Spanish War.

"Up the Mediterranean, my boys."

"The Bum's Song"—"Come all you jolly jokers and listen while I hum."

While these lovely bits hardly come under the classification of "Old Songs"—they are not without their especial "comether" and if we can dig 'em up, I'd pass 'em along.

ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE

Fishing.—JOHN B. THOMPSON (OZARK RIPLEY) care *Adventure.*

Small Boating.—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Canoeing.—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 117 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Motor Boating.—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping.—MAJ. CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M. D., American Tourist Camp Ass'n, 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Yachting.—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

Motor Vehicles; Automotive and Aircraft Engines.—EDMOND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

All Shotguns.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

All Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers.—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 69, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons.—CAPT. ROBERT E. GARDNER, 17 E. Seventh Ave., Columbus, O.

First Aid, Hiking, Health-Building.—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, N. J.

Camping and Woodcraft.—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Mining and Prospecting.—*North America.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-Precious Stones.—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Calif.

Forestry in U. S., Big game hunting.—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry.—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading.—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 North Main St. Paris, Ill.

All Army Matters.—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

World War.—*Strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background.*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care *Adventure.*

All Navy Matters.—LT. CMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

U. S. Marine Corps.—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

Aviation.—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

State Police, Federal Secret Service, etc.—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police.—PATRICK LEE, 157-11 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y.

Horses.—MAJ. THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs.—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

North and Central American Anthropology.—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Taxidermy.—SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

Entomology *Insects, poisonous, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology *Reptiles and Amphibians.*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ornithology *Birds; Habits, distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

Stamps.—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals.—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society. Broadway, at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Radio.—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Rd., Roselle Pk., N. J.

Photography.—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Football.—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Baseball.—FREDERICK LIEB, 250 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, N. Y.

Track.—JACKSON SCHOLTZ, P. O. Box 168, Jenkintown, Pa.

Swimming and Lifesaving.—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Skiing and Snowshoeing.—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Canada.

Archery.—EARL B. POWELL, care *Adventure.*

Wrestling.—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Sq., N. Y. C.

Boxing and Fencing.—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

The Sea Part 1 *British and American Waters. Ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands. Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea,* Islands and Coasts.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, P. O. Box 238, Benjamin Franklin Sta., Washington, D. C., ★2 *Antarctia.*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care *Adventure.* 3 *Old Time Sailoring, Ship Modeling and Marine Architecture.*—CHARLES H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Sunken Treasure.—*Authentic information of salvagable sunken treasure since 1588.*—LIEUT. H. E. RIESEBERG, P. O. Box 238, Benjamin Franklin St., Washington, D. C.

The Tropics.—SEYMOUR POND, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands.—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea.**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa.**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Fielding Star,* Fielding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania.**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands.**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care *Adventure.* 3 *Annam, Loas, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China, Southern and Eastern China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care *Adventure.* 4 *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. 5 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. 6 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.* 7 *Palestine.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

Africa Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C. 2 *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eriprea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDAN MAC CREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. 3 *French Somaliland, Belgium Congo, British Sudan.*—Temporarily vacant. 4 *Tripoli, Sahara, caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.* 5 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.* 6 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Co., Akron, Ohio. 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Simi, Calif. 8 *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. 9 *Buchuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgium Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, 24 Cuba St., Havana, Cuba.

Madagascar.—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe Part 1.—G. I. COLBURN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn. 2 *The Balkans: Jugoslavia, Roumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Turkey. The Austrian Succession States: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary—History, customs, travel.*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care *Adventure.*

South America Part 1 *Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.* 2 *Venezuela, The Guineas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 414 W. 121st St., N. Y. C.

West Indies.—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Neuva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America.—E. BRUGUIERE, care *Adventure.*

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. 2 *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. 3 *South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

★**Newfoundland.**—C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland *Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island (Fur Farming).*—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. 2 †*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. 3 ★ *Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* 4 ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. 5 ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Dept. of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. 7 ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. 8 *Northw. Ter. and Arctic, Ellesmere Land and half-explored islands west, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland.*—PATRICK LEE, 157-11 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y. 9 ★*Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie, Northern Keewatin, Hudson Bay Mineral Belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska and Mountain Climbing.—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Western U. S. Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spalding Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 2 *Utah and Arizona.*—GORDON GORDON, P. O. Box 2582, Tucson, Ariz. 3 *New Mexico (Indians etc.).*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. 4 *Wyoming and Colorado.*—Homesteading, etc. E. P. WELLS, Sisters, Oregon. 5 *Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGLESTON, Elks, Home, Elko, Nev. 6 *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Montana. 7 *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure.* 2 *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Ind., Ill., Mich., Miss., and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* 3 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi river.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. 5 *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, La. swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. 6 *Great Lakes (all information).*—H. C. GARDNER, care *Adventure.*

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. 2 *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor Me. 3 *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 436 Orchard St., New Haven, Conn. 4 *Adirondacks, New York.* RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. 4 *West Va., Md.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 1206 Second Ave., Charleston, W. Va. 6 *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga., Sawmilling.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* 7 *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The next issue of

Adventure

THE OLD MAN BEARS DOWN
A Story of the Transports
by James B. Connolly

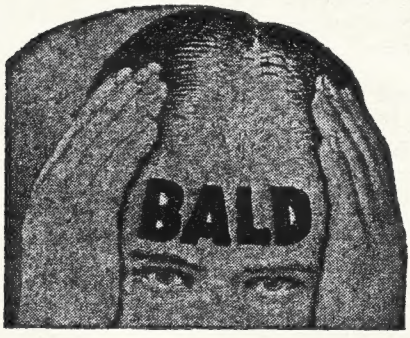
UNDER THE FRONT LINES
A Novelette of the War
by Ared White

PART II of BERRY FLEMING'S Thrilling Pirate Serial
THE SEA PLUNDERERS

AND THESE GOOD STORIES—BRISTOL THE BLUNDERER by Major George F. Eliot. HILLBILLY by Raymond S. Spears. HANRAHAN, DRINKING MAN by Andrew A. Caffrey. PECOS BILL GOES HUNTING by Tex O'Reilly. And other features.

The February First issue is on sale January 15

WHY MEN GO



Science Finds New Way to Remove Germ Cause and Activate Dormant Roots to Stimulate Hair Growth

(Read Free Offer)

A germ called "Flask Bacilla of Unna" gets deep into the scalp skin in many cases of abnormal hair deficiency, causing a most dangerous type of dandruff. It clogs up pores and hair follicles, causing itchy scalp, falling hair and prevents dormant hair roots (papilla) from growing new hair. Washing and shampooing does not remove the cause. It merely cleanses and treats the surface, rolling off the outer skin like water off a duck's back. No wonder baldness is increasing.

Now a new discovery enables people who have dandruff, falling hair, thin hair and baldness to harmlessly remove the congested, thin outer layer of scalp skin. This permits opened pores to breathe in air, sunshine and absorb a penetrating, stimulating scalp-food to activate the smothered, dormant hair roots and grow new hair. It is the most sensational discovery in the history of falling hair. It is all explained in a new treatise called "GROW HAIR," showing "anatomy of your hair" and tells what to do. This treatise is now being mailed FREE to all who write for it. Send no money, just name and address to Dermolav Lab., Desk 609, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y., and you get it by return mail free and postpaid. If pleased, tell your friends about it.

Sell to Stores

HANDLE REGULAR ROUTE

placing world's greatest line of Counter Card Merchandise with stores. Aspirin, Razor Blades, Dime-Lax, Bromo-Fizz, Confections. 100 fast selling displays. Over 100% profit for you and merchants. Steady repeat orders. No experience or investment needed to start. Big catalog FREE.

WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO.
Dept. 1866 Spencer, Ind.

LAW **STUDY AT HOME**

Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Be independent. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training. Earn

$3,000 to $10,000 Annually

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Successful graduates in every section of the United States. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 64-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 1076-L Chicago

For the JANUARY 15th DIME DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

Erle Stanley Gardner
Has Written

HARD AS NAILS

A smashing, complete, detective-action novelette about a brand-new type of criminal investigator with brains as well as brawn. His name's Gil Best and you'd better get acquainted with him and add him to your list of fiction detectives. If you don't decide to put him at the head of the parade we miss our guess! He's making his bow on the newsstands RIGHT NOW!

Wherever Brave Men Meet

Mozambique, Madagascar, Zamboanga, Saigon. "It's a tough trade in the China Seas." Callao, Calabar, Port Said, Port of Spain. "The west coast is the white man's grave." Powder River, Cripple Creek, the Greasy Grass, the Alamo. "There's no law west of the Pecos." Disko Bay, Biscoe Bay, Tierra del Feugo, Fort Yukon. "Hereabouts there died a very gallant gentleman." Brandywine, the Bloody Angle, San Juan Hill, Chateau Thierry. "Come on, you sons, do you want to live forever?" Do you thrill to the names of faraway places, of battles old and new? Stories by men who have been, who have seen, who know, are in

Adventure *15c*

Adventure is something more than merely a fiction magazine. Every year thousands of letters are received from readers, writers and adventurers and the most interesting printed in the unique department Camp-Fire. Every year thousands of queries on all outdoor topics are answered in Ask Adventure. Adventure is published twice a month.

© 1935, LIGGETT & MYERS TOBACCO CO.